



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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Mr. Hugh Nerlien
Kelvington-Wadena

[The committee met at 15:30.]

The Chair: — Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Human Services. My name is Alana Ross and I will be the chairperson this afternoon. Joining us today are Ms. Nicole Sarauer, chitting in for Mr. Jared Clarke; Mr. Matt Love, chitting in for Ms. Meara Conway; Mr. Muhammad Fiaz; Mr. Ken Francis, chitting in for Mr. Marv Friesen; Mr. Warren Kaeding; and Mr. Hugh Nerlien.

Before we begin I'd like to table three reports from the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel that identify any issues pursuant to rule 147(2) that he found with regulations and bylaws filed in 2020, 2021, and 2022, and any steps that have been taken to rectify these issues. If the committee chooses, it may bring in the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel to review these reports at a subsequent meeting.

Those reports are HUS 33-29, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: 2020 report on regulations and bylaws; HUS 34-29, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: 2021 report on regulations and bylaws; HUS 35-29, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: 2022 report on regulations and bylaws.

**General Revenue Fund
Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Vote 20**

Subvote (LR01)

The Chair: — Today the committee will be considering the estimates for the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety before voting on the committee resolutions. Minister McMorris is here with his officials. I would ask that officials please state their names before speaking and please don't touch the microphones. The Hansard operator will turn on your microphone when you are speaking to the committee.

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the committee members for being here today and having us here to defend our budget. I'm happy to be here to discuss and answer any questions regarding the estimates for the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety.

The officials I have here today with me is on my . . . Right behind me, I guess, is my chief of staff, Ryan Bellamy. To my left is Drew Wilby, the deputy minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety. Elissa Aitken is the assistant deputy minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety. To my right is Phil Germain who is the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board. There are a few other officials here, and I will have them introduce themselves if they're called on to answer any questions.

Since being appointed the Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety in August of last year, I've gained a new appreciation for the work that the ministry does to help citizens in our province.

As we all know, Saskatchewan is rapidly growing which means more people, more jobs, and more opportunities. The ministry is committed to helping foster this growth while also protecting what we have built in Saskatchewan. This is being done by focusing on serving the citizens of the province, building a culture of compliance around workplace health and safety, protecting workers' and employer rights, and fostering a fair and balanced employment environment. I am proud to say that this year's budget will continue to advance these important priorities.

This year the ministry's budget is 20.498 million. This is a slight reduction of 0.9 per cent from the '23-24 budget. This reduction is largely due to the transfer of the foreign worker recruitment and protection unit to the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training. I will speak a little more about that later in my comments.

I think it is important to highlight the importance of fiscal responsibility, and the ministry is working hard to ensure it is using its budget in ways that best serve Saskatchewan citizens.

Funding for the asbestos registry. This year's budget includes 230,000 in one-time capital funding to replace the asbestos registry. Ensuring the province has a functioning asbestos registry is vital to keep workers safe.

Mesothelioma is another asbestos-related lung disease. Diseases have been the leading cause of work-related deaths in Saskatchewan for more than a decade. While there is increased awareness of the hazard of asbestos exposure, it is important that workers are able to determine when asbestos is present in a public building before they begin any type of renovation. The registry was initially launched nearly a decade ago, and replacement of the registry will help ensure we are working to keep everyone safe from the harm associated with asbestos.

Funding for occupational health and safety. Keeping with safety, I want to spend a moment to talk about occupational health and safety in Saskatchewan. We know the important role that occupational health officers play in fostering the culture of workplace health and safety. The ministry remains committed to reducing the provincial time-loss injury rates and will continue to use the tools available including work site visits, enforcement, education, and when necessary, prosecution.

Legislative review. In this fiscal year the ministry anticipates completing a review of the employment standard provisions in *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* and the associated regulations. The ministry will also begin a comprehensive review of *The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020*. No additional funds were required, but this work is fundamental to fostering a fair and balanced employment environment in the province that encourages growth and investment while ensuring protection of the workers.

Transfer of the foreign worker recruitment and protection unit. Lastly I wanted to note that the '24-25 budget includes the transfer of the foreign worker recruitment and protection unit to the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training. This includes two FTEs [full-time equivalent] and \$200,000.

As of October '23, Saskatchewan's population was estimated at

1.2 million with an annual growth rate of more than 31,000, which is at an all-time high. We want to continue to see our province grow, and our government is working hard to make sure Saskatchewan is a destination of choice for foreign workers and immigrants from around the world.

With growth in immigration to Saskatchewan, we want to ensure there is an integrated approach to protecting the integrity of the immigration system. The transfer of the program to ICT [Immigration and Career Training] means all aspects of the program, from recruiters to immigrant nominees, can be monitored and the ministry can work more seamlessly to protect workers. This move to ICT will also provide provincial responsibilities for immigration together under one ministry and help build and protect Saskatchewan's interests.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, I want to end with saying that the staff within the ministry are dedicated to making a difference and this is a budget that responds to and delivers on our commitment to the people of Saskatchewan. With that I'd be more than glad to answer any questions that the committee may have.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor for questions. I recognize Ms. Sarauer.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Minister, for your opening comments. Just before we get started on the questions that I have, I would like to ask you to expand on a few of the items that you touched on in your opening remarks, Minister. The first one is around the employment standards review which — correct me if I'm wrong — I do believe you said is still ongoing. Can you provide some further detail as to how that work has been done and timelines to completion.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yes. Thank you for that question. And I may have the officials answer a lot of these when it gets more into the technical part, I guess. So the consultation process has been under way. We've sent out 153 contacts or letters to interested groups — stakeholders, I guess — throughout the province. We've received 89 submissions back, which is really quite, from my perspective and a lot of other consultation, that's quite a good number, a high response rate.

So what we're doing now is just kind of going through that internally, finding some common themes, looking at what would come next as far as whether it would require legislative change or regulatory change, and then trying to hit the next kind of legislative cycle, which as we all know is a little bit away with the pending election in October. However it works to kind of find the common themes, what needs to change, and then put it into the legislative cycle.

Ms. Sarauer: — So just to reiterate what I believe you just said: there is the hope of, if there will be legislative change, that that will likely happen the next legislative cycle, whenever that begins.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Right. Which usually, you know, it probably begins in the fall. You know, in past, I mean legislation is introduced in the fall and passed in the spring generally, I believe. Whether we can hit that with a fall election is pretty tough because, you know, it goes through a number of committees within government before it makes its way to the

floor. And so I'm not sure it would be kind of a year from now changes, but certainly we're working on it. And the election does tend to slow things down a little bit.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah, and I'm also thinking sometimes there's a bit of a truncated session that happens right after the election, so it might be difficult. But I'm hearing that there is a desire in the ministry to have this done expeditiously, as expeditious as passing legislation ever is I suppose.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yeah.

Ms. Sarauer: — Are there any common themes coming out of your review of the responses that you'd be comfortable speaking about broadly in committee this afternoon?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Let me just see.

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, deputy minister, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety. Thanks for that question. We've seen a variety of things come back obviously from both employer groups, employee groups, organized labour, as well as others across the board.

I would say it's mixed in terms of the pieces but really focused on those core areas that we look to consulting on, which include application of employment standards provisions, youth employment, definitions of an employer and employee in particular as we look at students and contracting gig workers and the such, hours of work, wages and regulation of tips, protection when ill or injured, employment leaves, layoff and terminations, and authority of employment standards officers.

So most of the feedback did come in those areas. There were a few other pieces that were put forward, but safe to say that was the core focus.

Ms. Sarauer: — And refresh my memory, when will employment standards come up for review again?

Mr. Wilby: — Section 9-13 of the Act provides that, through legislation, within I believe it was 10 years. But of course there were some conventions made for the COVID period and as such, the whole Act has to be reviewed; there's still a couple of outstanding parts. But then after that it's every five years the Act has to be reviewed in its entirety.

[15:45]

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. In addition to the review around employment standards provisions, does this also include, internally, a review of employment standards branch and how it's operating?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So I think the question was kind of what a review of the ministry itself, and that . . . You know, what we've been talking about is the legislation and reviewing of the legislation.

If changes are made in legislation, you know, there would probably be a review of the ministry and how to properly include any changes in legislation so that the ministry is caught up. But generally that is, you know, an ongoing process through the

deputy minister and staff as to making sure that, you know, we're meeting what is needed out there, i.e. whether it's inspections and all of that. So that's kind of an ongoing process, I would say.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah. Thank you. I appreciate that. I obviously haven't . . . I'm not privy to all of the submissions being provided to the ministry. Some of them have been sent my office's way. I'm not pointing to anything specific that I've seen in any of them, but I was thinking in particular around enforcement and that sort of thing.

If there were concerns being raised about the ministry's capacity for doing that sort of work, if that is something that the ministry's always looking at on an ongoing basis, that's good to hear. Or if that's part of this particular review, both a legislative and a structural review, that's something I was interested in knowing. That's all.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So I think I'd just say to that is that there's an ongoing work-in-progress, whether it's, you know, including work site visits, whether it's the enforcement piece, whether it's education and, when necessary, prosecution. But that's kind of a work-in-progress, depending on what's going on in the province and where there are issues that may be arising.

Ms. Sarauer: — And the submission deadline is closed now. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Moving on to the OH & S [occupational health and safety] review you mentioned is about to happen, I believe. Can you provide some more detail as to what that's going to look like?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Just to bring you and myself up to date is that the OH & S legislation was passed, of course, in the spring session about a year ago. And we've embarked on the regulations and changes to the regulations and consultation on that.

It's an interesting time because we're months away from an election and there's, you know, legislation and regulation as to what you can and can't do as far as consultation through the writ period. So I think probably most of it would come forward after. Yeah, a discussion paper on sask.ca, news releases encouraging participation, and the engagement letters and inserts to stakeholders — so that's kind of what's taking place right now. And then I would think probably more after October is when the regulations will be put in front of the public and the committee.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. So this isn't a broad OH & S review. It's focused with respect to the legislation that was passed last year?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Correct. That it'll look at the regulations in their entirety.

Ms. Sarauer: — I understand there's a discussion paper that's been posted or a consultation paper that's been posted online. Are there any specific organizations that you're reaching out to as well to solicit feedback?

Mr. Wilby: — Should I introduce myself every time at the mike? All right. Drew Wilby, deputy minister of Labour Relations and

Workplace Safety. Good thing I can remember my own name.

So the paper will be posted in that period after the writ. So some of that work obviously is commencing within the ministry at this period. But we don't want to have to start consultation and then stop and then start again because obviously we're limited during the writ period what we can and cannot do. So that will be posted online.

It will be, you know, a cross-section of employer groups, of labour groups, interested citizens. I mean basically anyone and everyone can submit something if they so desire, which is what we encourage, as widespread consultation as possible on these pieces. But we will have those targeted letters going out to . . . Employment standards is about 150, I would say. It'll be there or somewhere there north of that we'll send letters out to, encouraging that feedback.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. And so just to clarify, the paper isn't posted on the website now but will be after the election?

Mr. Wilby: — That's correct.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Moving on, you mentioned the move of the foreign worker recruitment and protection unit from Labour to Immigration, to TED [Trade and Export Development]. Can you speak a little bit about — you mentioned it, you touched on it briefly in your opening remarks, Minister — about why this change happened? I'm just curious if there was some challenges around cohesion. What particular issue is being addressed in this move?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So there are really three kind of main reasons why it was moved. Protection of vulnerable workers is important for creating fair work environments and strengthening Saskatchewan's reputation as a destination of choice for newcomers.

With the growth of immigration to Saskatchewan, we wanted to ensure that there is an integrated approach to protect the integrity of the immigration system, and by transferring the legislation authority for *The Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act* to Immigration and Career Training, all aspects of the provincial immigration system can better monitor and manage through one ministry.

So it really is nothing more than that, is to make sure that it's under one ministry from kind of start to end. And we really think it would be handled better for the workers themselves as far as, you know, kind of a one-ministry stop as far as immigration.

Ms. Sarauer: — Will there be a change to the number of FTEs working in this unit?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So as was mentioned in my opening remarks, we see a \$200,000 transfer. So that shows as a little bit of a drop in our budget but would increase, I guess, the overall TED budget. But in Career and Immigration, these two employees, FTEs, how they will utilize those through that ministry is determined by them. If they, you know, need to expand that, I guess that would be their choice. If they, you know, change the roles of those two FTEs, again that would be up to ICT, yes, Immigration and Career Training.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. In this budget there is a 6 per cent decrease in funding for employment standards. Can you explain what this decrease is?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So it would be in employment standards; it would be a 6 per cent change. I said 0.9 but I was talking about the overall budget of Labour Relations. But in this specific area, it is 6 per cent, and it's all on the movement of the foreign worker recruitment and immigration services.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay, thank you. There aren't really any increases across the board in Labour this year, as you had mentioned. There's, you know, slight increases in central management and services. But last year there were some slight decreases at labour relations and mediation, OH & S, employment standards.

Can you provide to the committee an explanation as to how these subvotes can go without any increases year over year when you consider inflation and salaries and that sort of thing?

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, deputy minister. So in terms of the overall ins and outs you've identified, there are some small pieces there. And if you want to talk about what those are, we're happy to do so.

From our budgetary perspective, we're about 72 per cent salaries. And of course we know that — well, for us — most of those are in-scope employees. Obviously there's current negotiations going on between the Public Service Commission and the SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union], so any increases associated with that would be dealt with through the bargaining table, and it wouldn't be appropriate to get into that, of course.

So in terms of those pressures and where those may fall, we've obviously done, you know, the proper accounting and made sure that we're looked after on that front going forward. But we'll await those collective bargaining agreements and those potential settlements to see what those are. And that of course may, down the road, impact what our budgetary numbers are. But for now, it's I guess at 72 per cent salaries is where we sit.

Ms. Sarauer: — Aside from the two FTEs who are part of that move that we've already discussed, are there any other changes to the FTE component within the ministry?

Mr. Wilby: — No.

Ms. Sarauer: — As you had mentioned, Minister, in your opening comments, there is some capital funding dedicated to replace the current asbestos registry. Can you tell the committee a little bit more about this replacement? I'm curious about what sort of software this will be operating on, that sort of thing.

[16:00]

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, deputy minister. So in this year's budget we have \$230,000 allocated for the asbestos registry. The registry initially was conceived in about 2012 with what was called Howard's Law at the time. Of course very unfortunate circumstances pertaining to a worker in the province who brought the concept forward, and you know, his family were

strong advocates for that at the time. 2015 it was enacted and we had it in place. And of course what it does it identifies those buildings, public buildings where asbestos has been found, to protect workers from going in and hopefully protecting them from coming into contact with asbestos, and allowing employers to provide the proper parameters around that to protect them.

The challenging thing with asbestos is, you may be aware of course, is that it often shows itself in these challenges many years down the road, 20, 30 years down the road, which of course, you know, we're living with today.

So in terms of the renewal of that contract, due to trade agreements we had to put it out to market. And so we've issued a request for proposal out to market. We've put a best guess with our information technology division partners at about that \$230,000 mark. We think that's fairly generous, but of course we'll see what the market comes back and tells us. The trade agreement there, it's over 50,000 we have to procure that service, and so we're abiding by that.

That RFP [request for proposal] will close on April the 29th of this year. After that we'll work with our partners over in SaskBuilds and Procurement and the ITD [information technology division] to work through which is the best candidate, you know, what does that look like, what best meets our needs, and of course abide by all those procurement laws and regulations accordingly.

We are hopeful that we'll get something quick. We have the legislative obligation to have something in place by December of this year, or we'll have to look to extend the current contract that we have. So we will hopefully have a new product up and running by the end of the calendar year this year.

Ms. Sarauer: — Why are you moving on from your current contract?

Mr. Wilby: — It's trade regulations. So because we've renewed that contract . . . So I'm not a procurement expert, but I can tell you the layman's version of what I've been told. Because we've renewed that contract so many times and it's over that mark — I believe this one is, well it's maybe the New West Partnership agreement; it's one of them — because it's overtop that threshold, we have to take it out to RFP. We don't have the ability to just renew the contract any longer.

Ms. Sarauer: — Do you anticipate there will be an annual cost to maintaining this registry?

Mr. Wilby: — We would anticipate annual licensing costs, which we would budget out on an ongoing basis, you know, depending on of course where they are. All of that'll be brought forward as part of that request for proposal, both what capital build costs for this year would be, as well as a potential project management cost within SaskBuilds and Procurement, on our own side. And then moving forward, those annual licensing costs if there is something that's there.

But again, you know, we'll see that as those proposals come in and we do that evaluation accordingly.

Ms. Sarauer: — So just so I understand, the \$230,000 will be

for start-up fees basically, start-up costs, and then there will be likely ongoing costs as well?

Mr. Wilby: — Yes, the 230 is what our anticipated start-up cost on the product would be, or on the registry. And then in our years we would continue to budget what those ongoing fees are for licensing and the such, which we would anticipate to be significantly less than that initial start-up cost.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Minister, in your business plan you note a goal of fostering a culture of compliance with employment laws to ensure better outcomes in the workplace. Can you tell the committee about your plans to develop, update, and implement standardized investigation procedures?

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, deputy minister. So in terms of, you know, standardized investigations that's both . . . I would anticipate where the question's coming from is both on our occupational health and safety area as well as our employment standards area. The ministry, you know, very committed to training and making sure that we do have those high standards in place.

Our occupational health and safety division has gone through sort of a cultural renewal, I would suggest, over the last few years, which is great. You know, recent results would suggest that the culture there is quite high, and they're really focused on those key areas of going out and doing their inspections as well as where those investigations are required, doing them as well, making sure that, you know, all of those notes and different pieces are in place and are captured well. And I think that highlights itself as they move towards the prosecutorial side and the high level of success that they have there in terms of the officers' work and the standard in how they conduct themselves and their business.

It was interesting coming into the ministry and just seeing the pride, the pride in driving those trucks, the pride in wearing that uniform, and seeing where they are and going out there knowing that they're helping the people of the province and especially helping workers go home safe at the end of the day.

On the employment standards side, the same piece there as well. Some standardized training at the front end and making sure that the work that they're going out and doing and those investigations that they're conducting, that they're making sure they're balanced. They're making sure they're looking at all the facts and evidence and working through what potentially those money judgments might be and those other pieces of the work that they do.

I would ask ADM [assistant deputy minister] Aitken there if she has anything to add to that.

Ms. Aitken: — Elissa Aitken, assistant deputy minister. One piece about the occupational health and safety branch that I would add is, last April we started a post-inspection survey program within the branch and so we then . . . It's a voluntary survey that as officers go out and interact with workplaces, they're invited to provide feedback on officer conduct in particular.

And we've been really excited to see both the response rate and

the responses that we've been getting. So very positive responses with between 95 and 100 per cent of our respondents indicating that they agree their interaction with the officers was positive and that the officer was knowledgeable. So really good to see that kind of a response rate coming from the people we interact with every day.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. That survey that's going out, is that provided to both employers and employees that are interacting with the investigator?

Ms. Aitken: — It's provided as part of the workplace visit so I think it might, you know, might depend specifically who they're interacting with.

Ms. Sarauer: — Who they're interacting with.

Ms. Aitken: — Yeah.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. This probably goes to what Mr. Wilby was mentioning about the cultural renewal within OH & S. I'm wondering if you can expand on that a little bit more.

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, deputy minister. Yeah, we've had some new leadership in our occupational health and safety division. He's brought forward some of that renewed cultural piece and just sort of the previous experiences that he's had. But also to the officers and it's a wide swath of individuals that we're able to bring in there now. We've got folks from industry, you know, some folks from the enforcement sector as well. But we've really focused on an approach of education, intervention, and enforcement — sort of a three-legged stool, you could call it. So any time an inspection is conducted there's an opportunity to educate.

I was on one not long ago where we were out there and met with the occupational health and safety committee on site, of course both workers and management. And the officer worked them through some of the challenges they were having, and really looking at the regulations and boiling it down to those nuts and bolts of what is it that they need in place in order to be successful, and teaching them as they went through it, showing them where are some of the gaps and challenges, what's out there.

If they did find something on the work site, bringing that back and then further building that out and looking at those pieces through the regs. So really focused on that education, and of course then intervening with those tools that are needed and enforcing where required. And there's obviously activity that needs to be enforced, and you know, we believe they have the tools required to do that and get that job done.

Ms. Sarauer: — Just to expand on this thought, you, Minister, also mentioned in your business plan that you will “use appropriate enforcement tools to increase compliance.” Can you explain what tools are currently at your disposal to increase compliance?

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, deputy minister. Our officers have a variety of tools on the occupational health and safety side when they're out on a work site or when they're going and doing the work that they've got. That stems from, you know, of course the inspections that they do. They could provide an officer's report

if they feel they need to. There could be a compliance undertaking. They could issue notices of contravention, which of course are a mechanism meant to hold accountability. They do have summary offence ticketing abilities as well. There are 12 offences that they can provide summary offence tickets for. We currently have 10 officers in the province that are able to provide those.

And then of course, you know, the ultimate piece — at the back end if required, and only when required — would be looking towards a prosecution and potentially prosecuting those really dangerous occurrences that do happen where either unfortunately someone, you know, has been killed on a workplace or a work site or a serious injury has occurred.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — If I could just add, if I could just briefly too, is I think, not having background in this file but being briefed and listening to the officials, compared to where we were 10 years ago, education has become probably the biggest tool in the tool kit to make sure that . . . You know, I would say that employers do not want to have accidents. Accidents happen, and how do we educate them to prevent that?

And so that education piece — rather than just kind of go out with, you know, reprimands — working with the employers to make sure that they understand what needs to change in their work site to ensure that their employees are safer. You know, I think that's what our officers are probably doing more now than they did a number of years ago, is that education piece.

And as Elissa mentioned, the whole — for lack of a better term; you had a better term — exit survey after the officers are gone. What, you know, what does the employer, employees feel about the process, and how can we improve it?

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Let's talk about prosecutions, particularly how many files went to prosecutions in the last year?

Mr. Wilby: — So just to clarify, do you want occupational health and safety and employment standards?

Ms. Sarauer: — Yes, please.

Mr. Wilby: — You betcha. So as of February 29th, 2024 — so leaving March out for the time being because those numbers are still being kind of put together — in '23-24 fiscal year we saw 26 occupational health and safety cases sent to Justice or referred to Justice. Twenty prosecutions were initiated; 19 convictions with total penalties of \$1.312 million. For the same time period in employment standards, there were three prosecutions initiated for employment standards violations; two convictions with total penalties of \$7,400.

[16:15]

I know you're well versed in this, but of course some of those convictions are from previous years' files being initiated and that whole time lag and draw.

Ms. Sarauer: — Remind me. You have dedicated officers. Is that correct?

Mr. Wilby: — We have two of them, yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — Two of them. And where do they operate?

Mr. Wilby: — They operate in the Ministry of Justice.

Ms. Sarauer: — In Regina? Sorry.

Mr. Wilby: — I should know the answer to that. I believe there's one in Saskatoon and one in Regina, but we will get clarification for you and provide that back.

Ms. Sarauer: — Sure. Thank you.

Mr. Wilby: — Sorry. Fast information, they're both in Saskatoon.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay, thank you. Thank you for that. Minister, in your business plan you also noted that the target for '24-25 is to maintain a compliance rate for employment standards of 85 per cent or greater. Do you also have a target for compliance under OH & S?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So I think the term Mission: Zero is our target. That's our long-term target. Everything that we do is moving towards that long-term target. But what we've done is put in some performance measures in the short term. What we want to see in '24-25 is to reduce the provincial time-loss injury rate to 1.65 per cent by December 31st of 2024. So that's our short-term target. Total injury rate on the calendar year, our target for '24-25 is to reduce the total provincial injury rate to 4.5 per cent by December 31st, 2024.

I think I've always . . . with numbers and statistics, especially on this, to just do year over year isn't always accurate because it can take one bad situation that can cause . . . So Elissa has kind of the longer term, like a five-year window so that we get a better understanding of the trajectory of where we've come from and where we want to go to get to Mission: Zero.

Ms. Aitken: — Elissa Aitken, assistant deputy minister. Looking at our time-loss injury rate over the last five years, I guess both our time-loss rate and our total injury rate, of course both of those were affected by COVID a bit. We saw a little bit different trends than we would probably normally have seen, so we're watching all of those numbers carefully to see what happens as we stretch those trends out.

Looking back to 2019 though — so these would be calendar year numbers — our time-loss injury rate was 1.86. And then it came down in 2020 to 1.78 and then bounced back up a bit in '21 and '22. So being at 2.03 in '21 and 2.04 in '22 and then back down to 1.78, which is where we were at at the end of 2023. So we think it's a positive trend. We're optimistic that it will stay on that downward trend, and really excited to see those numbers continue to come down.

Total injury rate then, same kind of story in terms of bouncing around a little bit through COVID. We were at 4.95 in 2019. Then that came down in 2020 to 4.46, and then just came up a little bit to 4.56 in 2021, down to 4.33 in 2022, and then down, I'll say substantively, to 3.95 in 2023. So again, really positive trends in the last year. A little bit of up and down through COVID, and so hopefully those trends down just continue as the workforce stabilizes a bit now that we're through the pandemic.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. I appreciate you anticipated my next question, which was asking what those numbers were. So thank you for providing them to the committee.

Now I want to point your attention to a very specific incident of which I'm sure the ministry is well aware. It was a recent situation that was in the news about a boy who worked, a young man who worked at a grocery store in Canora. He was 14 years old, poisoned by carbon monoxide.

Can the minister speak to the OH & S report and what type of penalties, if any, the employer is facing?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you for the question. And certainly I'm aware of it and have been aware of it prior to the news story that was out I think as of yesterday, I think it was. But we knew certainly about it before.

I will say, that is one thing that is kind of new to me as a minister only since, for the last number of months, is getting notices of what's happening around the province. You know, I'll get a buzz on my phone, and it really puts it in perspective. I don't think about workplace injuries, you know. I tend not to very often. But I'll get a notice on the phone on a Saturday afternoon or a Sunday morning of an incident that has happened in the province, just to keep me up. And it makes you think about it an awful lot more.

We go along with our lives and we may be isolated, but for the person that's in that situation, it's not an isolated event. It's their whole life. So it sure kind of brought a greater attention for myself on the amount of — I guess even, you know, we're doing very well in the province — but the amount of incidents that do occur, some of them very minor but some of them obviously not as minor, that has been an eye-opener.

This one of course I was notified quite early. And you know, it was a young worker at the Gateway Co-op in Canora. He was hospitalized due to exposure to carbon monoxide. It was because a pressure washer was used without proper ventilation. And we all know, I guess some of us, you don't have to be born on the farm, but born on the farm know the situation working in a shop or whatever, how it can kind of sneak up on you. And you know, it shouldn't happen but I can see it happening. It shouldn't happen.

So the occupational health officer conducted an inspection, which resulted in a total of four contraventions issued to the employer. The employer has provided a progress report for all the contraventions issued. And so as of now, because they've complied, the file is closed.

Those OH & S regulations: 3-8, "Training of workers" was an issue; 3-6, "Supervision of work"; 3-3, "employment of youth persons"; and 21-6, "Substances listed in Table 18." So that, you know, gets into the technical part of it. But you can see, of course, obviously training of employers, supervision of work. Pretty darn young employee. So the employer has taken those and followed through with, you know, the appropriate measures so that it doesn't happen again.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. I do really appreciate the update. And absolutely, it's a horrific, horrific situation that happened. Something that luckily doesn't happen often but when

it does, like you said, workplace injuries when they do happen, they're not good. Why was there a decision not to use any of the more stringent enforcement mechanisms like a summary offences ticket or a prosecution?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I think I'll let Drew get into that whole piece as to . . . There's legislation around all of that, that there are kind of limits as to what we can and can't do, but I'll let Drew talk about some of those limitations, I guess.

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, deputy minister. Thanks for that question, and as the minister said, our summary offence ticketing wouldn't apply in this case because those four contraventions, we don't have the legal authority to issue a summary offence ticket under those pieces. There are the 12 that do apply in circumstances, but of course don't apply in this.

As well, for us to look at a potential prosecution and further, to refer to our investigation section, at present the individual would have to spend over 72 hours in hospital, which is an interesting mark, you know, considering not many people spend 72 hours in hospital. So as we look at those regulations that the minister's talked about before — over the course of the summer, into next fall and through — we'll definitely look at that mark and determine if it's still meeting the needs.

We'll look specifically at this case, and is there an opportunity to potentially make some changes there through our regulatory review. As we've said, that hasn't been reviewed in 20 years so it's probably quite timely to do that just as things have changed, the society has changed, as time in hospital has changed and such.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. I appreciate that. Now Sean Tucker, someone who I know the ministry knows well as an expert in this field, he suggested the creation and use of something that does exist in a few other jurisdictions — I believe federal level and I think BC [British Columbia] as well — the use of administrative monetary penalties as a separate, stand-alone, created enforcement tool. Has the ministry considered creating an administrative monetary penalty in Saskatchewan?

[16:30]

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yeah, I'm aware of, you know, Sean's comments, and there's been others certainly on this. And so I think, as Deputy Minister Wilby mentioned, as we're going through a review right now, this is front of mind. There's nothing that we can do now, but what can we do into the future to help prevent?

And you know, some of what you're talking about would be more on the deterrent side as opposed to the education side. We have no problem looking at what other provinces do and looking at best practices and how they adopt to Saskatchewan because there are variations from province to province. What works real well in one maybe doesn't work in the other. But that doesn't mean we won't look at it and see how that can apply, and look at best practices from other provinces and put them in place here.

And I know there's some that would wish we could, you know, make it retroactive, but by legislation we just can't do that. But that doesn't mean that going forward we can't look at some of

those. And again those are kind of more on the punishment side, which when there's a situation like that some people want to move towards.

That's why I think that education side up front. This, you know, you don't want to have that happen, but being public and having other employers see something like this happen, I'm sure they look at what they've done and hopefully take steps so that it doesn't happen again.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah. Thank you for that. We've spoken a little bit about the numbers of files that have been referred to prosecutions, to the Ministry of Justice, and then the amount that were ultimately prosecuted. Is that number constrained by capacity at the level of Ministry of Justice?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So I guess the answer — to be black and white — is no, it wouldn't be limited, the number of prosecutions because of staffing or . . . Again that tends to go through Justice, but we have two dedicated prosecutors that work on this. So we don't feel that if it doesn't go forward it's because of lack of human resources.

Ms. Sarauer: — So just to clarify, the number of dedicated prosecutors you have is sufficient for your needs at this time?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yeah, we believe so at this point. We don't see that there's any work being missed because of it.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Could you provide this last year's total number of asbestos injuries?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I'll start and then I'll turn it over to my right, Phil, with WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] and then Drew on a couple of pieces.

So this is a file that again it's hard to believe when we were talking about the asbestos registry and the changing, I remember it as plain as day. And I can't believe it was 10 years ago when that came into effect and Howard's Law and all of that. And thank heavens we've come so far, but we've got a lot further to go because asbestos was pretty much used everywhere for a while there back a number of decades ago.

So Phil will touch on the fatalities that have been reported this year and also a little bit on the education piece through WCB. And Drew will then get into, you know, the inspections that we're doing within the workplaces — as that number I'm sure probably compared to 20 years ago has increased substantially — the investigations that we're doing and working with employers and sites to make sure it's safe for workers and helping with the employers. So Phil.

Mr. Germain: — Phil Germain, CEO, WCB. As it relates to asbestos-related fatalities, we had 29 fatalities and 5 of those were asbestos related in 2023. And just for comparative figures, we had 16 asbestos-related fatalities in 2022.

Whether or not it's directly related, we have had since 2012 a very strong focus on the prevention of asbestos-related exposures and fatalities. Part of the campaign, if you go to the WorkSafe website, there's significant resources on there as it relates. There's videos, tools. There's voluntary standards in terms of

training and education for employers and workers. There's FAQs [frequently asked questions], and there's stories about people's lives and how exposure to asbestos impacts people, so trying to motivate them to use the tools and resources and education that we have available for them.

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, deputy minister. Just a few numbers for you. From April 1st, 2023 to February 29th, 2024 our officers conducted 195 asbestos-related work site visits and issued 71 contraventions on asbestos-related inspections. So it's still a very live issue for us and for our officer complement that's out there working.

I think what's important though, and what Phil's talked about, is that education side. So between April 1 of 2023 to again that February 29th date, 517 high-risk asbestos project notifications were received from individuals to the ministry, compared to 494 in '22-23 and 570 in '21-22. So again those are coming in, which is helping fill that gap of information around where are these asbestos-related issues, what's happening, and allowing ourselves to take action, and of course Phil's team on the education side to provide more of that.

Just a little bit on the registry if I may, because I probably haven't talked about it quite enough. Currently there's 59 organizations who have 5,263 facilities reporting over 26,400 locations of asbestos in public buildings. Over the last year, again ending on February 29th, there were over 42,300 searches of the asbestos registry web page. So again that information is getting out there to the public, to individuals who are clearly affected by this, and making sure that they have some of those tools to prevent themselves from that exposure.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Has the ministry seen a reduction in asbestos claims?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Just when you mean claims, do you mean claims as far as inspections, or claims as far as possible injuries?

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah, I apologize. I said the ministry, but I'm thinking more along the line of injuries. So this might be a better question for WCB. I'm not sure.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you for the question. It's interesting questioning because it's evolving and there's more public awareness now of asbestos. And so what does that do to the numbers? Does that change the numbers? And we would think we'd maybe see a pattern. We don't necessarily see a pattern yet.

But I think what's important is that the public and employers and employees know the issue. And I think with the dialogue that happens, whether it's public or within occupational health and safety, it's extremely important because it brings awareness.

Phil can maybe touch on the numbers. And you know, I looked at the numbers as he showed me and it really is kind of interesting. But I'll let you go through the numbers, how injuries are down one year, up the next year. Fatalities are up one year, down the next year. And it's not parallel. They're not parallel.

Mr. Germain: — Phil Germain, CEO, WCB. So as the minister

alluded to, these claims typically take many, many years to manifest themselves into an injury. So we register incidents, when people are exposed, as well as injuries or reporting of the disease, and then we track fatalities related.

In 2022 we had 18 incidents and injuries reported. In 2023 we had 53 incidents and injuries reported. Yet fatalities in 2022 were 16, and fatalities in 2023 were five. So there's no visible trend right now in terms of these old, old exposures that are still working their way through the system.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. Last year, the minister at the time mentioned there was an ongoing issue around asbestos affecting firefighters. Could you provide some information as to what work the ministry has done in the last year to address this issue?

[16:45]

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I'm not sure this will completely answer the question, but it will certainly move towards it. And I know the member is very familiar with it, the bill that went through the House. And thanks, thank you to the opposition. It passed this spring, the Bill 138, *The Workers' Compensation (Extending Firefighter Coverage) Amendment Act*. So there was again consultation.

I will say that the professional firefighters and the volunteer firefighters do a very good lobby. As long as I've been elected, they've been here in the spring for a one-day lobby and make their case very, very well. Maybe government moves too slow, but we have moved to be the province that covers the most presumptive injury, cancers or whatever. This year we of course added six more to be covered through Workers' Compensation — penile, pancreatic, thyroid, soft tissue sarcoma, mesothelioma, and laryngeal cancers.

So when you look at the list here, which is really quite an interesting list of all the provinces and territories — I think there's 25 on this list? 23? — I think we cover all but one, which is by far the best coverage of any province. There are many provinces that maybe cover half as many as we do through our Workers' Compensation Board.

So I think your question was kind of what changes. And those would be the most dramatic changes, I think, other than continued education.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. Last year's estimates, I was told by the ministry that labour standards employment centres were next in line for legislative review. Has that occurred? Is that happening?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I would thank the member for the question and say, make sure because that previous minister . . . In jest, only in jest. I can see why you're checking on what he said last and to see if actually the two Dons that are sitting in the front desk on the left are on the same page. But I will let Drew talk about it, what's next in the file.

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, deputy minister. Yes, so the next parts of the legislation that would be up for review after we conclude the employment standards piece would be part VI

which of course is the Labour Relations section, and then part VIII which is the labour-management disputes during an election section as well. And so that should get us pretty close to our finalized complete review of *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* that we talked about earlier.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. That makes more sense to me. I very much appreciate the two Dons sitting in the front of the Chamber.

I have a couple of questions for the Labour Relations Board just on data and stats. I understand that they just lost their Chair, which is very sad for the board but a very, very well-deserved appointment to the bench. And much congratulations to Justice Morris as he moves on in his legal career.

Could you provide some information to the committee in terms of how many applications the board has received this year?

Mr. Coulthard: — Ryan Coulthard, board officer with the Labour Relations Board. So in this year for applications from April 1st, 2023 to February 29th, 2024, there's 198 applications filed. Most of those applications are within part VI of *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*, which is the vast majority of what the board does, and there's 160 filed under that part.

Ms. Sarauer: — How many dispositions did the board render this past fiscal year?

Mr. Coulthard: — So dispositions in total were 169 until the end of February.

Ms. Sarauer: — And how long on average are the days to decision this last fiscal?

Mr. Coulthard: — So the average days to final decision for the Labour Relations part VI were 74 days.

Ms. Sarauer: — That's an increase from last year, which I believe was 59 days. Is there a reason for that?

Mr. Coulthard: — Ryan Coulthard, board officer. I don't have specifics on the increase. It could be a number of factors. That's from the date from application into the date of decision. So it could be hearings take longer. Decisions are typically rendered within six months following the close of the hearing. Some files take longer than others. Some are quicker. So I don't have any specifics on if there was an exact cause on the increase of days.

Ms. Sarauer: — Does the board set a goal for what they want to achieve in terms of average days to decision?

Mr. Coulthard: — So as far as timelines go, the board looks at having decisions rendered within six months from the hearing being completed. Some cases are more complex than others. They take more time. Decisions may be quicker in situations where there is no disputes between parties. So the timeline really is six months from when that hearing is completed to being that written decision issued to the parties.

Ms. Sarauer: — That's the goal. Six months?

Are you seeing trends, generally speaking, with the applications

that you've received over the last year?

Mr. Coulthard: — Not so much trends. I guess typically we see more certification applications than anything else, but it does fluctuate with the types of applications being submitted to the board. That is probably consistently the most common type of application.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Moving back to Workers' Compensation. Sorry to move you back and forth. But last year injuries in the health sector by far had the top injury rate. It looks like the numbers have come down a bit. Please correct me if I'm wrong, but it looks like right now processing meat, poultry, and fish have the highest rate of injury. Can you provide some comment on that?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thanks for the question. And you're right — your kind of initial question about health care having the highest injury and highest rates — they do have the highest rates. The good-news story is they're coming down. They've been coming down for many years and it isn't just by accident. That's maybe not the right term. It just isn't happening. It's happening because of lots of work between the WCB, health authorities, and Labour Relations or Workplace Safety looking at how we can drive those numbers down. Still higher than what we want but going in the right direction.

On the other piece, I would say meat processing is on the radar screen, not so much. And Phil can get into the different codes because they fall under different codes, and Phil can talk about code-specific. But generally across the board we're seeing a reduction, even though there's more employment in the province.

I think when we went through . . . Well I maybe, probably . . . The annual report is tomorrow, so I probably can't go any further than that. Whoops. That's what happens when you talk longer than you should. So I'll just leave it at that and we'll learn more about kind of where the WCB is, as the annual report is released tomorrow. But we can talk more generally on the rate codes and the reduction of injuries and fatalities in the province.

Ms. Sarauer: — The information that you're able to provide today — I understand that the annual report's being tabled tomorrow — but any information that you can provide today is appreciated. And I won't push you on the things that you can't.

Mr. Germain: — Phillip Germain, CEO, WCB. What I can say is we are working with the M72 rate code, which is meat processing, just trying to work with them to figure out things that we can do at an industry and individual employer level to try and bring those down. That particular rate code has been one of the higher rate codes for many years.

Ms. Sarauer: — How's that work going?

Mr. Germain: — Good. The industry's responsive and we're working very collaboratively with them right now to figure out where that's going to go.

Ms. Sarauer: — Just on the Worksafe partnership, I'm wondering if you can provide some information about the trends that you saw over the last fiscal year.

[17:00]

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, deputy minister. First I'd say the Worksafe partnership is, to use the word "flourishing," you know, the partnership between LRWS [Labour Relations and Workplace Safety] and the Workers' Compensation Board. The relationship that Phil and I have established on that, you know, we're moving things along, and the team is as well.

Some good numbers year over year. Saskatchewan's 2023 time-loss injury rate was 1.78 per cent. So that's a decrease of 12.75 per cent from the 2022 rate of 2.04 per cent. We also saw the 2023 total injury rate was 3.95 per cent, again a decrease of 8.78 per cent from 2022 rate of 4.33 per cent, so trending in the right direction. We also see the number of WCB fatalities from January 1st to December 31st decrease by 25.64 per cent from 39 in 2022 to 29 in 2023. We also know that 90 per cent of Saskatchewan employers achieved zero injuries and zero fatalities in 2023. So some solid progress there.

Of course, you know, from our perspective, we're focused on the back end — the investigations, the inspections, and the enforcement provisions within Worksafe. And I turn it over to Phil to talk a little bit about the front end and the education that they're doing.

Mr. Germain: — Phil Germain, CEO, WCB. So one of the key pillars of the fatalities and serious injuries strategy is education for workers and employers. And in 2023, Worksafe itself trained over 37,000 individuals, almost 38,000 individuals in various courses across . . . Those were on-demand courses, in-person courses, and virtual-led classroom, so a number of different avenues for employers and workers to take training. And they took advantage of that training in significant numbers last year.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — And if I could just add, again back to, the main focus is Mission: Zero. All of this is to get to zero.

Now, you know, drops are good and decreases of 12 per cent and 8 per cent is all very, very positive — and I was just saying, asking the deputy minister — but when I get notices on my phone, it doesn't really mean a whole lot because somebody just has been injured at a work site that, you know, hopefully could have been prevented. So we haven't got to mission zero.

Ms. Sarauer: — One of the trends noticed last year was an increase around issues surrounding violence in the workplace, as well as mental health. Is that still a trend that's being noticed? And if so, what's being done to address it?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So very good question. And unfortunately when we look at the numbers — and you know, if you want to get deeper into the numbers, Phil certainly has it — we've seen an increase in the numbers of reported violence in the workplace, as well as an increase in mental health issues. And quite often it's connected, be one after the other. So we've seen an increase year over year for the last probably eight, nine years.

And we can probably all think of reasons why that is. And you know, I can speculate, but that's all it is. You know, there's probably a greater awareness of reporting that, whereas perhaps before it wasn't; maybe people didn't feel as comfortable reporting a mental health issue or even violence in the workplace.

But we can kind of get to speculate on why that is.

The real thing is, is the numbers are increasing. So effective May 17th, 2024, all provincially regulated . . . This is changes that have happened to the employment Act as of 2023. Effective May 17th, 2024, all provincially regulated employers must develop and implement a violence policy and prevention plan to respond to the incidents of violence within the workplace. Prior to these changes, only prescribed high-risk-sector workplaces were subject to these requirements. And I know you know that because you were critic as these changes came through. So that's kind of a start as to addressing some of the issues that we see in those numbers.

Ms. Sarauer: — Could we, if possible, could we go into a deeper dive on the numbers?

Mr. Germain: — Sure. Phil Germain, CEO for WCB. What we've seen from 2014 to 2023 as it relates to work-related injuries caused by violent events, they've slowly increased from 1,117 in 2014 to 1,687. Now there's more workers, so from a ratio that might not be changing, but we are seeing more violence, in particular when we break down the numbers, G22, which is health authorities and community of social services.

And as the minister pointed out, often people who work with clients or customers don't want to report violence on their customers and that's one of the things that we've been working with, is trying to make sure that people understand the importance of reporting these situations so they can be addressed.

Ms. Sarauer: — Are you able to provide more information as to what is being done to address these issues? You've touched on it briefly.

Mr. Germain: — So Phil Germain with WCB. There's probably three main things that . . . There's many things on the WorkSafe website in terms of violence prevention, but in particular there's violence prevention initiatives in health care. We work with the Saskatchewan Association for Safe Workplaces in Health along with the Saskatchewan Health Authority, trying to address . . . There's a subcommittee on violence prevention, developing a strategy on violence prevention. We've been working with Saskatchewan Association for Safe Workplaces in Health for, well pre-COVID, I know that, on a strategy to try and identify and deal with violence in health care.

There are initiatives in the service and hospitality industry. We've been working with the service and hospitality safety association on supporting them in initiatives as it relates to preventing violence, identifying and preventing violence in those service- and hospitality-related situations.

And then the third one is we've been working specifically with transit, bus drivers, in trying to prevent violence amongst bus drivers, working very closely with employers, the city of Regina, the city of Saskatoon, to try and help them identify ways that we can prevent violence related to transit workers.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. And that's been brought to my attention too. The ATU [Amalgamated Transit Union] has been doing some work advocating for their members. The incidence of violence on buses has dramatically increased over the past few

years. So I'm happy to see that WCB is particularly honing in on them and the work that they do and the safeties that they need. So thank you for that work.

Workplace harassment: do you have any numbers on incidents?

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, deputy minister. We had harassment provisions that came into force on January 1st, 2022, and that included an updated definition of harassment. Of course, it referenced the prohibitive grounds found in *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* as part of that.

You know, and looking at our numbers over time and specific to the question, in terms of the investigations we conducted, we've seen a slight uptick but I wouldn't say it's significant yet. Of course we do have those new provisions that have come into force where all workplaces need to have a harassment policy in place and, of course, posted in their workplace.

In terms of the number of inquiries that are coming in from individuals, again not a significant uptick. It's slight. But of course we now track sexual harassment as well as complaints concerning volunteers, students, and contractors too as per those changes within that legislation.

Ms. Sarauer: — Can you give me the numbers for sexual harassment?

Mr. Wilby: — For investigations or inquiries or both?

Ms. Sarauer: — Both.

Mr. Wilby: — Both. Not a problem. On the inquiries side in 2022 for sexual harassment, we had seven, keeping in mind that the changes only came into effect September of 2022. In terms of 2023, the number of sexual harassment inquiries were 42. And I can give you January and February of this year if you'd like as well. We were at a total of 13.

In terms of the investigation side of that, in 2022 and 2023 and 2024, so far we're at zero.

Ms. Sarauer: — Harassment investigations. Would that be just investigating the requirement to have the policy in place or the actual harassment incident?

[17:15]

Mr. Wilby: — So it would be actual acts of harassment that would be investigated, as well some of those inquiries too. What we may see with the change in policy, and we have seen it in other areas, is there may be a bit of a spike in that inquiry and the awareness that's brought to it, which is important and crucial.

What we're hoping of course over time is that having those policies in place, having them posted will change those behaviours and hopefully mean less harassment of course going on, and in turn less investigations and inquiries into the ministry.

Ms. Sarauer: — Is there any internal work being done to track whether or not there are . . . We talk about this and other OH & S situations when there's bad-faith employers who have had multiple issues with OH & S. I'm thinking about this particularly

in the harassment front, whether or not there's an employer who's, you know, having multiple issues with harassment in the workplace who's not doing the work needed to address it. Is the ministry tracking this information? And is there any work being done to address it?

Mr. Wilby: — Yeah, I think what you're referencing is our priority employer program, in general OH & S complaints and concerns that may arise, as well as our directed employer program. We definitely will be looking at these as they go forward, especially as, you know, hopefully investigations don't increase. But if they do and if we had to address that through either of those tools, we absolutely would on the harassment side of the equation.

Ms. Sarauer: — Being cognizant of the time I'm going to move on now. I would like some numbers around unannounced site visits with OH & S. Could you provide the number for this year, this fiscal year, this last fiscal year?

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, deputy minister. So again these would be statistics ending February 29th of 2024 for that year. Our OH & S officers conducted 4,945 work site visits. Interestingly 31 of those were COVID-19 related. We had 2,347 targeted interventions, so 1,599 of those were directed, 600 were targeted field, and 148 were in our priority employer program.

We had 1,220 officer-initiated — so those would be more the visits that you've sort of indicated in your question there — unannounced or more where an officer felt there was a need to go in and take a look at something. We had 801 complaints that had come in that resulted of course in investigator inspections, and 577 notifications of things and other pieces such as harassment.

Ms. Sarauer: — Sorry, can you explain what you meant by that last bit — 577 notifications?

Mr. Wilby: — 577 notifications, harassment, etc., different ways that we were notified of different pieces that had come in. So where we went out and did an inspection from some piece of information that we had received.

Ms. Sarauer: — And that's different from the complaint-initiated visits?

Mr. Wilby: — So that's referring to statutory notifications, things that they are obviously legislatively obligated to report.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay, thank you.

Mr. Wilby: — Sorry for the confusion.

Ms. Sarauer: — No, that's my confusion. Can you tell us what the outcomes were of these visits? How many contraventions? How many compliance undertakings, that sort of thing?

Mr. Wilby: — I can. So from those visits, resulted in 1,801 notices of contraventions; 196 compliance undertakings; 2,592 officers' reports; and 356 note to files. And because I think I know where you might be going, we issued 35 summary offence tickets. And of course we've talked about prosecutions already, but we sent the 26 files to Justice with 20 prosecutions initiated

and 19 convictions, totalling 1.312 million in fines. We also issued 184 stop-work orders.

Ms. Sarauer: — How many OH & S investigators do you have at this time?

Mr. Wilby: — Just for clarity, you're wanting the number of officers that we have?

Ms. Sarauer: — Yes, officers.

Mr. Wilby: — Officers. We have 68 officers. Apologies, Drew Wilby. We have 68 officers.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. What about employment standards? Could you provide that?

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby. In employment standards we have — I love FTE counts — we have 26.1 officers or client-facing staff.

Ms. Sarauer: — Do you have goals or timelines for if someone from the public calls employment standards, how long till their complaint is investigated, that sort of thing? And how well you're doing at hitting those targets, if you have some.

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, deputy minister. In terms of the timeline that we have, our average days to close last year was 61, which has come down quite a bit. In 2019-20, we were at 91 days to close. So we're quite happy to see that. In terms of a target that's set, we don't have an official target that's there. But we're again really happy to see that number come down.

It's been a bit of an interesting period. Through the COVID period, of course, the numbers came down significantly due to the fact that less people were working, less complaints being received. So we have started to see it come up slightly, but again being at 61 is a really solid number for our employment standards staff.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Understanding from the Chair that I have time only for one more question, I'm going to ask about the Fair Practices Office. How many inquiries did the Fair Practices Office receive in 2023, and how many of those were resolved?

Mr. Germain: — Phil Germain with the WCB. So the Fair Practices Office received 436 inquiries in 2023, which was actually a 15 per cent decrease from the year before. They took an average of four days to resolve those issues. So there was two hundred and . . . Well that's a breakdown, yeah.

The Chair: — We should probably do one more, if it's quick. Four minutes.

Ms. Sarauer: — Correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Germain. I'm not sure if you answered about how many of the inquiries were resolved. I think you gave me a timeline of days to resolution. But how many of those inquiries were actually resolved?

Mr. Germain: — Phil Germain with WCB. So of the 436 inquiries, there were 496 issues raised and 442 files were resolved within that four-day period.

The Chair: — We have reached our agreed-upon time for consideration of the Labour Relations and Workplace Safety. Before we vote, Minister, do you have any closing comments?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yeah. Thank you very much to the committee. Thank you very much for the questions. I've said pretty much at any one of these estimates for many, many years, I learn a lot. I'm always amazed at how much all the officials know on their file. I mean we spend, as political people, maybe a couple hours a week and they spend 40 hours, and it sure shows who has the information and the tracking of the numbers. Amazing.

So I just want to thank the officials that are seated behind me, and those that aren't here that work both in WCB and in Labour Relations and Workplace Safety for all the work that they do to keep our most important resource safe — the people of this province. So thank you to the officials, most importantly.

The Chair: — Ms. Sarauer, do you have any closing comments?

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you to you, Madam Chair, and the rest of the committee for your work this afternoon. Very much thank you to you, Minister, for answering my questions thoughtfully and thoroughly, as well as to all of your officials for being here this afternoon. I know preparing for estimates is a lot of work on top of the work that you're already doing keeping the people of Saskatchewan safe, so thank you for that. And just a very much heartfelt thank you to you for all of the work that you do and all of the people that you represent here today within your various departments. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister, and all of your officials. And thank you to all the committee members here this evening and to the Legislative Assembly staff for being here.

We will now proceed to vote on the resolution. Vote 20, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety. Central management and services, subvote (LR01) in the amount of \$5,197,000, is that agreed?

[17:30]

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Occupational health and safety, subvote (LR02) in the amount of \$9,675,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Employment standards, subvote (LR03) in the amount of \$2,911,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Labour Relations Board, subvote (LR04) in the amount of \$1,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Injured worker appeal services . . . Oh. Labour relations and mediation, subvote (LR05) in the amount of \$680,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Injured worker appeal services, subvote (LR06) in the amount of \$943,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of \$92,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, vote 20 — \$20,406,000. 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 sums for Labour Relations and Workplace Safety in the amount of \$20,406,000.

Mr. Nerlien. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Does the committee agree with voting off the remainder of the . . . Oh. Thank you. Does the committee agree with the voting off the remainder of the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 committed to this committee?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Thank you, Minister. You and your officials may leave. Thank you very much for being here.

So we will continue with voting off the remainder of the estimates and considering the draft report.

General Revenue Fund Advanced Education Vote 37

The Chair: — Vote 37, Advanced Education. Central management and services, subvote (AE01) in the amount of \$16,470,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Post-secondary education, subvote (AE02) in the amount of \$727,943,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Student supports, subvote (AE03) in the amount of \$48,113,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustments in the amount of \$400,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Advanced Education, vote 37 — \$792,526,000. 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 sums for Advanced Education in the amount of \$792,526,000.

Mr. Nerlien. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Education
Vote 5**

The Chair: — Vote 5, Education. Central management and services, subvote (ED01) in the amount of \$13,436,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. K-12 education, subvote (ED03) in the amount of \$2,442,939,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Teachers' pensions and benefits, subvote (ED04) in the amount of \$24,047,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Early years, subvote (ED08) in the amount of \$408,661,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Provincial library and literacy, subvote (ED15) in the amount of \$15,733,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Education, vote 5 — \$2,904,816,000. 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 sums for Education in the amount of \$2,904,816,000.

Mr. Kaeding. Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Health
Vote 32**

The Chair: — Vote 32, Health. Central management and services, subvote (HE01) in the amount of \$10,331,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Saskatchewan health services, subvote (HE03) in the amount of \$5,484,520,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Provincial health services and support, subvote (HE04) in the amount of \$331,313,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Medical services and medical education programs, subvote (HE06) in the amount of \$1,265,515,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Drug plan and extended benefits, subvote (HE08) in the amount of \$499,730,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of \$1,677,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Health, vote 32 — \$7,591,409,000. 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 sums for Health in the amount of \$7,591,409,000.

Mr. Fiaz. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Social Services
Vote 36**

The Chair: — Vote 36, Social Services. Central management and services, subvote (SS01) in the amount of \$58,952,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Income assistance services, subvote (SS03) in the amount of \$667,916,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Child and family services, subvote (SS04) in the amount of \$389,419,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Client subvote (SS05) in the amount of \$12,963,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Housing subvote (SS12) in the amount of \$74,727,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Disability programs and services, subvote (SS14) in the amount of \$340,777,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of \$6,453,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

[17:45]

Social Services, vote 36 — \$1,544,754,000. 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 sums for Social Services in the amount of \$1,544,754,000.

Mr. Francis: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Francis. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Lending and Investing Activities
Advanced Education
Vote 169**

The Chair: — Vote 169, Advanced Education. Loans to Student Aid Fund, subvote (AE01) in the amount of \$80,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Advanced Education, vote 169 — \$80,000,000. 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 sums for Advanced Education in the amount of \$80,000,000.

Mr. Kaeding. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Education
Vote 5**

The Chair: — Supplementary estimates no. 2, '23-24, vote 5, Education. K-12 education, subvote (ED03) in the amount of \$16,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Teachers' pension and benefits, subvote (ED04) in the amount of \$10,273,000. There is no vote as this is statutory.

Education, vote 5 — \$16,000,000. 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, 2024, the following sums for Education in the amount of \$16,000,000.

Mr. Nerlien. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Health
Vote 32**

The Chair: — Vote 32, Health. Saskatchewan health services, subvote (HE03) in the amount of \$237,400,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Medical services and medical education programs, subvote (HE06) in the amount of \$212,700,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Health, vote 32 — \$450,100,000. 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, 2024, the following sums for Health in the amount of \$450,100,000.

Mr. Francis. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Social Services
Vote 36**

The Chair: — Vote 36, Social Services. Child and family services, subvote (SS04) in the amount of \$19,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Disability programs and services, subvote (SS14) in the amount of \$3,750,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Social Services, vote 36 — \$22,750,000. 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, 2024, the following sums for Social Services in the amount of \$22,750,000.

Mr. Kaeding. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Committee members, you have before you a draft of the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Human Services. We require a member to move the following motion:

That the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Human Services be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Mr. Nerlien: — I so move, Madam Chair.

The Chair: — Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. That concludes our business for today. I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment. Mr. Francis has moved. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This committee stands adjourned to the call of the Chair. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 17:52.]