



STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE

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Mr. Greg Ottenbreit
Yorkton

[The committee met at 15:15.]

The Chair: — Hello, everyone. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice. I'm Mark Docherty, the Chair, and with me is Anne Drake from the Clerk's office. Sitting in for Betty Nippi-Albright is Carla Beck. With me on the committee is Gary Grewal, Travis Keisig, Tim McLeod, Greg Ottenbreit, and Lisa Lambert.

We're going to deal with the referral of estimates to committee. So pursuant to rule 148(1), the following estimates and supplementary estimates were committed to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice on March 31st, 2022 and March 23rd, 2022 respectively.

2022-23 estimates: vote 73, Corrections, Policing and Public Safety; vote 92, Firearms Secretariat; vote 30, Government Relations; vote 91, Integrated Justice Services; vote 3, Justice and Attorney General; vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport; vote 88, Tourism Saskatchewan.

2021-2022 supplementary estimates no. 2: vote 73, Corrections, Policing and Public Safety; vote 3, Justice and Attorney General.

**General Revenue Fund
Government Relations
Vote 30**

Subvote (GR01)

The Chair: — In terms of the consideration of estimates, today we will be considering the estimates for the Ministry of Government Relations and the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. We will begin our consideration with vote 30, Government Relations, subvote (GR01), central management and services.

Minister McMorris is here with his officials. And as a reminder to officials, please state your name for the record before speaking. Please don't touch the microphones. The Hansard operator will turn them on for you when you speak. Minister, please introduce your officials, make your opening comments, and then we'll have Ms. Beck have quick opening comments as well. Minister.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And it's great to see you sitting at the end of the table. I'm glad you're back. And to my left, I have my deputy minister, Greg Miller, and to my right is my chief of staff, Max Waldman.

Good afternoon. It's my pleasure to be . . . Before I maybe go into my remarks, we've got, obviously, a whole complement of officials behind that are very knowledgeable in all of this, and so when the questions get into any detail, I'll be certainly calling on them to do a lot of the answering.

So as I said, it's a pleasure to speak to the spending priorities outlined by the Ministry of Government Relations' budget for '22-23. I would like to begin by providing a few general comments on the ministry's budget, as well as a few highlights and priorities for Government Relations for the years ahead. As I walk you through the investment area for municipal and Indigenous relations and more, you will see that we are emerging

from the economic impacts of the pandemic and getting the province back on track. Following these remarks, I'll be happy to answer any questions from the committee members.

In the coming fiscal year, the budget of the ministry is \$650.5 million. That represents a 6 per cent increase from previous years.

First I'll talk about Government Relations' flagship program, municipal revenue sharing. It continues to be the envy of provinces across Canada. In '22-23, our government will commit \$262 million to the more than 770 municipalities in Saskatchewan. Our government has now provided \$3.7 billion to municipalities through municipal revenue sharing since 2007. This grant has increased by more than 106 per cent since we were given the honour of leading this province. This year is the sixth-highest year on record for the program.

The Government of Saskatchewan remains committed to providing municipalities with consistent and stable funding. As such, MRS [municipal revenue sharing] represents revenue from three-quarters of 1 per cent of the PST [provincial sales tax] from two years prior. This provides municipalities a level of consistency and predictability and the ability to adjust their own local budgets when there is a decline. These dollars can be invested into priorities at the discretion of the local council. It continues to be this government's belief that the locally elected are best positioned to invest these funds and know the needs of their specific communities.

Infrastructure and other grants. Providing funding to Saskatchewan communities for infrastructure programs continues to be one of the main priorities within Government Relations. This year the '22-23 provincial budget includes \$135.2 million in provincial support for municipal infrastructure. In the '22-23 we will see \$71 million for the provincial portion of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. The total amount, including the federal portion, is 162.6 million. And 32.7 million will be provided through Government Relations for the provincial portion of the New Building Canada Fund. The total amount, including the federal portion, is \$35.4 million.

We are also proud to provide nearly \$3.8 million this year to several municipalities under the transit assistance for people with disabilities program, supporting paratransit in Saskatchewan and making our own residents with disabilities continue to have access to critical services and economic opportunities like everyone else.

Finally we will continue to administer the federal dollars of the Canada Community-Building Fund, formerly known as the Gas Tax Fund, and distribute this much-needed funding of just over \$69 million to municipalities again this year.

Our other supports to municipalities here at Government Relations include changes and guidance on property tax, new and ongoing building and technical standards, as well as subdivision development and community planning. We adjusted the education property tax rate for the coming year to encourage consistency across the board and maintain jobs and economic development in this province. We endeavour to keep this increase under the provincial inflation rate to minimize the impact on

taxpayers.

We also have new standards requiring smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in all residences in Saskatchewan, effective July 1st of '22. This year's budget also includes 750,000 for the Conexus Arts Centre. This funding ensures that the centre can get back on track after two years of COVID restrictions.

First Nations and Métis Gaming. Moving into the budget for First Nations and Métis programs, this year the Government of Saskatchewan will be providing nearly 61.5 million for gaming payments to the First Nations Trust, community development corp., and the Clarence Campeau Development Fund. This year the profit distribution formulas of the gaming framework agreement and *The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Act* will resume. This demonstrates that the province and our partners are back on track to generate revenue and support Indigenous organizations and communities.

First Nation and Métis consultations. I'm also pleased to announce that the First Nations and Métis Consultation Participation Fund will be doubled this year. The total allocation of 400,000 will match the fund's current and annual utilization. This fund provides money in a timely manner for Indigenous communities to participate in the duty-to-consult process in order to provide information on potential impacts to their treaty and Aboriginal rights. It is something we will continue to support, as Indigenous communities of Saskatchewan participate in the economy's growth that is yet to come.

First Nation and Métis community grants program. Over the years Government Relations has provided additional support to Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan by offering a variety of grants aimed at supporting local Indigenous events and initiatives. These grants are open to all Indigenous people and organizations in the province. This year \$400,000 in new and ongoing funding is announced for projects that focus on Calls for Justice for all Canadians, identified in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This report raised considerable awareness about the tragedies that have affected multiple generations of Indigenous women and girls and those of diverse gender and sexual orientation.

I am pleased to say that the overall total funding for First Nations and Métis projects and sponsorship is now set at \$800,000 in the '22-23 budget and beyond. This remaining \$400,000 in funding will continue to support projects that draw attention and awareness to interpersonal violence and to support projects and events related to safe communities, stronger families, student achievement, and economic growth.

Beyond our funding programs, we continue to help address suicide and mental health issues in northern Saskatchewan by supporting the Embracing Life initiative. Through this initiative we work with a cross-section of Indigenous leaders and other industry and government representatives to ensure a holistic approach to this serious issue. Also the ministry continues to work in partnership with First Nations and Canada on the important work of creating reserves in both urban and rural areas through treaty land entitlement and other claims.

To conclude my remarks, I would like to describe our budget by

taking a closer look at our expense types. Nearly 97 per cent of Government Relations' budget reflects third-party transfer payments. The majority — 88.7 per cent — of the total transfer funding is provided to municipalities and municipal stakeholders, primarily through revenue sharing and infrastructure grants; 10 per cent is provided to First Nations and Métis organizations; and 1.3 per cent is provided to the Provincial Capital Commission.

This leaves 3.2 per cent of our ministry's total budget to deliver ministry programs. These include community planning and support; ongoing programs, services, and reconciliation efforts in relation to our First Nations, Métis, and Northern portfolios; as well as building and technical standards.

This concludes the overview of the Ministry of Government Relations budget for '22-23. It is a budget that responds to and delivers on our commitment to communities and the people of Saskatchewan. So I and my officials will be more than happy to answer any questions that will come from the committee. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister. Ms. Beck, if you have any opening comments.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Minister, for that introduction, and welcome and thank you to your officials with you here today. Quick shout-out to Hansard and the broadcast folks and those with Legislative Assembly. Fellow committee members, it feels like it's been a little bit of time since we've all been in this room together. And I'm learning a new critic portfolio this year, so that's always both interesting but might cause me to ask some questions that you might have to indulge me through. So I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you this evening.

Minister, I think I'm going to start where you started, and that was around the municipal revenue sharing portion of your budget. The question I had first was the amount of PST total that was collected in 2020. Would you have access to that information?

Mr. Donais: — Good afternoon. Laurier Donais, assistant deputy minister with the Ministry of Government Relations. So in 2020-21 the provincial sales tax came in at just over \$2.1 billion, so 2,100,523,000. And then you take 0.75 of one . . . point of PST, and you come to the \$262 million that's in our budget.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. And the MRS is calculated on the whole of the PST that's collected or a portion thereof?

[15:30]

Mr. Donais: — So in terms of the PST, the \$2.1 billion is what's actually collected and brought into government, into the General Revenue Fund. And so I guess if you want further clarification with regards to any exemptions that apply to PST, that would probably be a better question for the Ministry of Finance.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you for that. I think I will, perhaps in the next couple of questions, make my question more clear. The next question I had was around, how much of the municipal revenue

sharing will be forwarded to municipalities next year?

Mr. Donais: — Yeah, so off of the \$262.6 million that's under the municipal revenue sharing subvote, there's 1.5 million that goes to targeted sector support program. So that's programming, you know, on behalf of and for municipalities. And then there's a further 597,000 that is used to fund the Ombudsman because municipalities are subject to local authorities freedom of information Act. And so then the net there is just under 260.5 million which goes to all municipalities. So that would be cities, towns, villages, rural municipalities, and then northern municipalities.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. In this budget, the PST was expanded to a number of new items and services. My question is, will this expansion be calculated in the 2024-2025 MRS grants?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So what I can say is that first of all, it's not a large number when you get down to 0.75 of 1 per cent of the increase. It will bring in more money for sure. And I think it's roughly figured maybe 10 million in the first year because it's only half a year that the PST will be expanded, and then maybe up as high as 20 million the second year. Then the municipalities — you're right — in two years' time will see some benefit of that.

And there really hasn't been any really talk as to that the pool would change because it's broadened, whether it would . . . Because if you go back, the history of municipal revenue sharing, it was I think 1 per cent at one time. And then when the PST was broadened, it went back to 0.75. So municipalities were kept whole. They received as much as they did the year before, and there is no talk of any adjustment that I've heard of.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, and that's where I was looking for some clarity. If I remember correctly, when the PST was expanded and the reduction to the 0.75, the full suite of the expansion of the PST wasn't included in the calculations? Or it was? With construction labour and children's clothing, for example, restaurant meals.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So yeah, just to go back, and I partially answered it but it . . . So it went from 5 per cent to 6 per cent and expanded, and that's when the formula was changed then with the municipalities so that they received as much the following year after all of this, you know, as they did . . . But the formula was changed. It dropped down from 1 per cent to three-quarters of a per cent.

And I brought it up candidly at the SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] convention about if they wanted to change the formula because there are some municipalities . . . We were at, I believe it was 275 million last year, 262 million this year, and there was kind of complaining by some of the municipalities. They didn't like to see it drop down.

That was the whole point of revenue sharing, is when the PST was increasing year over year, municipalities would benefit. If it ever took a bit of a nosedive for one or two years, they would also then be kind of responsible for that. I mentioned to them in passing that if it was 275 the high year, if you wanted to sign on for a 10-year agreement, we'd just freeze it at 275. In other words, they'd see no benefit of what we think will be quite a bit

of growth in the province moving forward. They could certainly do that, but I didn't have anybody tap me on the shoulder after and ask, where do we sign up?

They all understood that, you know, there is a bit of a drop this year, could be a bit of a drop. It's about four and a half per cent, I think, was the reduction. Maybe next year. But we anticipate that it will be going up. Again the concerns if you go back a year were that the municipal revenue sharing would drop far more than just four and a half per cent. You know, there was people saying it's going to drop 20, 25 per cent, and that would be a very big hit to municipalities.

But I think most have realized it's a bit of a reduction, but they can manage and would rather be part of the formula moving forward when we see, you know — what is it? — \$14 billion worth of investment into the province in the next couple years.

Ms. Beck: — So you're going to get me off of my questions, but I will just note that . . . And I understand that there's a two-year lag and over time it evens out. I think perhaps the point that was being made at SUMA, it's sort of an extraordinary conflation of this reduction and then the increase in both the needs that municipalities have experienced over the last two years and also the inflation, which I don't think any of us had on the horizon, probably even a year ago. So I'll just put that there.

Just to clarify, when the PST was expanded to the new basket of items, and again in this budget where there's an expansion to a number of additional items, will the PST generated be a part of the calculations, or will those additional baskets be excluded from the municipal revenue sharing grants?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So I'll just say that there's been no talk of changing the formulas, so it will be included as . . . I mean it's a really quite simple formula when you think about it. Whatever we bring in as PST, they get three-quarters of 1 per cent. Period. Not kind of baskets here or there and everywhere, and that gets to be very, very kind of confusing at times. So this a very, pretty straightforward calculation once we know what that provincial PST is from two years ago.

Ms. Beck: — I appreciate the clarity. In 2018-19 there was a review of the grants, and a number of eligibility requirements — I believe six of them — were brought in place. Now municipalities are asked to note or affirm their compliance by way of online declaration. As of January 31st, which I understand is the deadline, how many municipalities had completed this requirement?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I'll just get Sheldon to go into more depth, but it's a very timely question because we just went through this for about a half an hour, 45 minutes, in a morning briefing that I had. And they've really worked up a great dashboard showing . . . because there's a couple variables. There's one, how much money went out through municipal revenue sharing, and then there's the other area of how many municipalities are not compliant.

And it really varies because you can imagine that the city of Regina, Saskatoon, all the cities are compliant. That's a vast dollar amount. But when there's 771, or depending on which file we're looking at, you know, we're still really quite good with

compliance. But I'll let Sheldon kind of go through the numbers between both dollars and then municipalities.

Mr. Green: — Sheldon Green, assistant deputy minister of municipal relations division of Government Relations. Thank you for the question. I'd start by indicating that the declaration for the current fiscal year that we're just entering, the declaration to municipalities opened last November and it stayed open till the 31st of January. And it's continued to be a bit of a moving target in terms of . . . because municipalities at that immediate deadline continued to be tracked to see where their compliance is at. So my statistics are more current than the 31st, right up to the 29th of March.

We're tracking right now that 98.4 per cent of the revenue-sharing dollars will go to compliant municipalities. So that's leaving 1.6 per cent right now is the forecast, or about 4.2 million that is potentially — it's pending — whether it'll be paid on time or whether it'll be held for a little while. When we do hold funds, we accrue them and we release them to municipalities when they become compliant.

In terms of your specific question around the number of municipalities, 720 are fully compliant, so that's almost 94 per cent. We anticipate that in each given week that number improves as municipalities catch up on deadlines of things that they're deficient in in their declarations. And so that leaves 6.5 per cent of municipalities or 50 that were in a state of either non-compliant or pending partial compliance with some of the items.

Ms. Beck: — Is there a breakdown by category, by cities, towns, villages, resort villages, rural municipalities, and northern communities?

Mr. Green: — Yes. The breakdown of that compliance is that urban municipalities, so that is towns and villages outside of cities, they're sitting at about 93 per cent compliance. Rural municipalities are just over 98 per cent compliant today, or as of March 29th. Cities are at 100 per cent, and northern municipalities are at 46 per cent of partial compliance. Northern municipalities are under a slightly different phased-in policy arrangement to provide more time to get into compliance. But the statistic of full compliance is 46 per cent.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. And the phased-in compliance, is that new or that's ongoing? That's happened before?

Mr. Green: — That's since we initiated the eligibility requirements last year.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. And is there support provided to those communities to get them closer to compliance?

Mr. Green: — Yes, definitely. Very robust outreach occurs. Diplomacy, assistance with understanding what the requirements are. We even have sample template bylaws for a couple of the items to really make it as easy as possible for them to comply.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. This is the second year that this compliance has been in place?

Mr. Green: — Correct.

Ms. Beck: — Is this an increase or decrease? Going back again I guess to that deadline, the January 31st deadline, is this an increase or decrease? Did you see an increase or decrease in compliance?

Mr. Green: — It's almost identically the same. At the end of the declaration period, we were at 93 per cent, each of the first year and again this year. As we've seen in this year, although at January 31 we were at 93 per cent, we've improved since then.

[15:45]

Ms. Beck: — Looking at some of the documents — and I do have the quote here; I think it's from the *Declaration of Eligibility Guide* — it's noted that incomplete declarations or not meeting all of your eligibility requirements may disrupt your municipal revenue grant sharing payment. Last year how many grants were delayed or were not paid out?

Mr. Green: — We ended last fiscal year with 1 per cent of communities that didn't have their grant paid out. There were nine municipalities, nine out of the . . . I think last year there would have been one or two additional municipalities than there are now, but it equated to 1 per cent by the end of the year.

Ms. Beck: — And how many were not in compliance by the end of last year? What percentage?

Mr. Green: — One per cent.

Ms. Beck: — One per cent as well. Okay. Is there a breakdown of those communities that were not in compliance?

Mr. Green: — At the end of last year there was . . .

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — A couple comments while Sheldon is getting the exact number. The intent is not to withhold revenue sharing. The intent is to get revenue sharing out. And that's why we work with the communities as closely as possible. And you know, it would be maybe five or six that aren't compliant at the deadline. We work with them and bring them into compliance, and as Sheldon said, only 1 per cent at the end of last year. We think each year moving forward that will get less and less. We should be up, hope to be up to 100 per cent because our intent is not to withhold this cash. It's to get it out.

But we want to make sure that . . . I mean there's a reason why these guidelines are put in place to ensure that the municipalities are compliant with the different recommendations or guidelines that we need followed. So, Sheldon.

Mr. Green: — Yes. At the end of last year, as I said, there were nine municipalities. There was one town and eight either northern hamlets and a couple of northern villages, for a complete total withholding amount of 1.376 million.

Ms. Beck: — So those funds that are withheld, if they become compliant in subsequent years, they're held there and will be distributed?

Mr. Green: — Correct.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. This is more out of curiosity than anything,

but out of the six criteria, is there one or are there several that tend to be the area where there's non-compliance?

Mr. Green: — Yeah, we consistently see that the . . . Although it's a small number of municipalities, what they do struggle with is their accounting side of things and having their audited financial statements done on time. That seems to be the theme of the largest area that they struggle with.

Ms. Beck: — So with the online declaration, of course . . . And again, this is intended only as a question about oversight. I notice there's an audit policy. How is that selected? How many of those declarations are audited in a given year? How is that determined?

Mr. Green: — On the question of audits and the process, we randomly select 20 municipalities every year of varying municipal types for audit. And then what we do is we seek certified copies of particular bylaws; signed or sealed council resolutions to support it; copies of the members' public disclosure statements, for example, to match the items that are part of the declaration; and a signed and sealed certified copy of council's resolution confirming that in fact the declaration has been submitted. And so once we do that, we look through it and we determine whether they're in compliance or not. And that's part of the audit function.

Ms. Beck: — When you did the 20 audits, did you find full compliance?

Mr. Green: — On the question of municipalities under the audit that were found to have inaccurate information, one village was identified. And that particular village is in the process at this moment of transferring and dissolving its governance into the neighbouring rural municipality.

Ms. Beck: — Now I want to ask two questions at the same time. I'll ask this one first. In addition to the random audits, is there any mechanism for complaint-based if there are concerns that are generated from ratepayers? Or it's strictly the audit process?

Mr. Green: — I think we would take information from whomever and take a look at it.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. On the one village that was identified as having some deficiencies in their declaration, did the process of dissolving governance into the RM [rural municipality], was that already under way? Or did that happen subsequent . . .

Mr. Green: — They were already in a process of dissolving, and that was one of the things that we had discovered when we had audited them as well, as part of the process of the eligibility requirements.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. And that happens through the municipal board. Is that correct?

Mr. Green: — No, no.

Ms. Beck: — No? How does that process . . .

Mr. Green: — The process of municipalities that are dissolving their governance occurs at the Ministry of Government Relations and working with the affected municipalities directly.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. How many municipalities would be going through that process in the last year?

Mr. Green: — Last year?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Maybe I'd just add a comment while Sheldon is kind of looking up the exact numbers.

This doesn't happen without a lot of work in consultation with the ministry. I think, only the ones that I can speak of are the ones that I've been involved with as the minister, and it's, you know, a willing RM and a willing village. Nobody's forcing this on the village, saying you have to dissolve; you need to become into compliance. But the ones that we've been working with realize that with their population base, that it's just very, very difficult, and so they have been quite willing. And there's a couple that I know of for sure that are quite willing to then be dissolved into the RM.

But again, the RM has to also be at the table, and the Ministry of GR [Government Relations] does a great job in bringing the sides together. And for the most part, I don't think there's been too much concern. It's been a win-win situation.

Mr. Green: — In the last year, there have been three villages that have dissolved their governance into their neighbouring rural municipality.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. So if there is a process under way to dissolve a community — a village or a hamlet — into an RM, and there's also a process, say an annexation process before the municipal board, how do those processes stack together?

Mr. Green: — Well an annexation process is technically a boundary alteration between two municipalities, typically only two municipalities. And that's not connected to the governance of the municipalities themselves. It's specifically related to their electoral boundaries that they would have.

The dissolution component is actually merging the governance and services side and the assets with the neighbouring municipality. So they're separate. The only connection to boundaries would be that in the new order for . . . When the village is restructured into the rural municipality, the former village's boundaries disappear, and they become included within the rural municipality's boundaries.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Maybe I'll just add, on the boundary change or annexation that was mentioned, that then becomes a negotiation between the two municipalities. And generally they can find agreement, often with mediation. And when it doesn't, when they can't, that's when it is escalated to the municipal board. But generally the vast majority, 90-some per cent, agreement is found. As I say, sometimes through mediation, but agreement is found. And I mean those are the best-case examples rather than to have a third party step in. But that's what the municipal board does as well.

Ms. Beck: — Right. How many disputes would be before the municipal board this year?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — We just need a little clarity. Are you asking how many are in front of the board that is regarding boundary alterations, or do you mean just disputes that are going in front of the municipal board? Because municipal board deals with a lot more than just boundaries. But if you're just asking boundaries, we think there's probably only one that's in front of the municipal board.

Ms. Beck: — One. And then I think the other thing that I'm looking to get a sense of is — I know over COVID there's been a bit of a backlog — if there's a higher than normal number of pieces before the municipal board. So just one annexation is what I'm hearing you say? Okay. And then is there a backlog due to COVID as well?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Not when we're dealing with, you know, boundary alterations, there's no backlog. I would say that, you know, on the one that is in front of the board, there needs to be public consultation. So that has been held back, and you know, this I think has taken maybe a little bit longer than most all wanted it to, but that was due to the times that we were in. So anything that was taking up time for public consultation is going to be held back a little bit.

Ms. Beck: — That makes sense, thank you. All right, I'm going to look at the municipal economic enhancement program. And so the most recent document I have notes that the grant-based program is distributed to municipalities on a per capita basis based on the 2016 census population numbers. When will it be calculated on the 2021 numbers?

[16:00]

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So that program was really in the last budget year, although communities that received money through the MEEP [municipal economic enhancement program] program for projects have until the end of March, I believe, to complete. So that's why, I guess, it would be some crossover into this fiscal year.

But you know, to go back to the municipal revenue sharing, again that was an allotment of money, and \$150 million with really no strings attached could be looked at as an enhancement to municipal revenue sharing. And I'll guarantee that the reductions that we're seeing this year at 262 and perhaps the reduction that we may see next year will certainly not add up to the 150 that was put out to municipalities at the very early outset of COVID.

And again it was in order to keep the economies rolling in those communities. And it was strictly on a per capita basis for 2016 census and virtually no strings attached other than, you know, make sure the money goes to the projects that you say it's going to, and a bit of a deadline to have those done so they just didn't drag on and on.

Ms. Beck: — So go quickly out the door. The source funding for that program, was it federal, provincial, or a combination of both?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Only a provincial.

Ms. Beck: — Provincial.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yeah.

Ms. Beck: — All right. So I'm going to go into some of the federal grant funding streams, ICIP [Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program] being the first. The green infrastructure stream: how much is allocated through this stream in this budget?

Mr. MacDonald: — Thanks for the question. My name's Jeff MacDonald. I'm the executive director of the municipal infrastructure and finance branch. Rather than focus on how much is allocated into the budget, what I'd say is, the way that how much goes out in any given year depends on how many projects are approved and their progression throughout the year.

But what I can say is under the Ministry of Government Relations we have over \$636,000 allocated within the environmental quality stream of the green stream. We've got another 54 million in total project cost allocated under the green climate change mitigation sub-stream. And so those collective projects will be active, and as they submit claims throughout the year we'll remit those payments.

Ms. Beck: — Okay. So just so I've got that clearly, what's allocated is to flow that money through to the municipalities on approved projects. What's the total number of approved projects under the green infrastructure stream?

Mr. MacDonald: — Again thanks for the question. We've got 64 projects that are actively approved under the green stream.

Ms. Beck: — How many applications were submitted?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — We'll maybe work and get that exact number for you. There's two different intakes, dating back to 2019, of applications that would have come in. Then it goes through, you know, the rating process as to which then gets forwarded to the federal government, and then they have a final say in it. So you know, there's kind of a number of off-ramps that these projects kind of follow along, and some will come off because they don't maybe meet the criteria.

Maybe the municipality has already started the work, which then makes them ineligible. So we're trying to grasp all those that have come in, made it through all of our criteria, then to the federal government, and have been successful. So we'll endeavour to get that answer back. Sixty-four have been approved both provincially and federally, but we'll endeavour to get the number of total applications that have come in through that stream.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you for that, Minister. And I think maybe to respect the time of everyone here as well as my colleague who's ready behind me here, I'm going to ask if you could endeavour under each of the streams — so the green infrastructure stream, community culture and recreation and infrastructure stream, the public transit infrastructure stream, rural and northern communities infrastructure stream, as well as the COVID resilience infrastructure stream, which is . . . Is that depleted at this point or are there still funds available under that?

Mr. MacDonald: — The COVID stream, when it was announced, it wasn't any net new money. So what it did was take away from the other streams. And so we have fully allocated the

amount that we set aside, if you will, for the COVID stream.

Ms. Beck: — I appreciate that. So what I'm looking for under each of those streams is how much is in the current budget, what's the total approved amount for projects that have been approved, total number of projects approved, and the number of submissions under each category. I believe we're back together at some point later in the week.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Yeah, Wednesday we're back for four hours so we'll work to have all those numbers put together for you.

Ms. Beck: — Okay, perfect. And I think I will perhaps ask one more question before I hand it over to my colleague. The prompt payment legislation that was brought in — and I'm going to forget the year — one of the things that I have heard from a number of entities, including municipalities, that there's some desire for an amendment to exclude municipalities from that legislation. I'm just wondering if there is any consideration for that or any work towards that, Minister.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So what I would say is that piece of legislation is really through Justice so any amendments would be through them. Having said that though, I think you're right. You had mentioned that you'd heard from a few municipalities that would like to be exempt. There has been no plans on moving on that as of right now. And again I'd have to see what Justice has in mind, but there was no plans on moving on that any time soon.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. I think I won't dare go over time here. So I appreciate the hour that we've had, Minister, your officials, Mr. Chair. And I'm going to turn it over to my colleague from Douglas Park.

The Chair: — You have two minutes left.

Ms. Beck: — Oh, well I could think . . . I've got lots of questions.

A Member: — It'll take you two minutes just to get out of here.

Ms. Beck: — I will cede my time. Thank you.

The Chair: — I'll introduce everybody that's here. Okay, while we have a minute here I will introduce, chitting in for Ms. Carla Beck is Ms. Nicole Sarauer. And sitting here with me, replacing Anne Drake, is Miranda Gudereit. And I would be remiss if I didn't say hello to our Page, Tahera. So thank you for that.

Ms. Sarauer, the floor is yours. Unless you want a minute to . . . Do you want any opening comments?

Ms. Sarauer: — Are there opening comments with respect to the Provincial Capital Commission specifically? If not then, we'll just go right ahead.

The Chair: — Are you doing Provincial Capital? Yeah, that's fine. Yeah, go ahead.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Minister. And thank you, officials, for being here. I have a few questions for you during our short time together. My first question is around designating the west lawn a place for peaceful demonstration, education, and cultural

exchange. What work is being done to consider designating the west lawn for these types of activities specifically?

[16:15]

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thanks for the question. And I kind of expected that to be coming after listening to some petitions in the House. And the member that I think has been reading the petition, there has been a referral kind of answering this very question.

And really the answer is, for public consumption, is that there is a review of the Provincial Capital Commission that will be conducted. An RFP [request for proposal] will go out in the next few months we think, or shortly, that will then address it. Then it will be an awful lot of public consultation because the park is for all and we want to get as much input as to how and what residents in and around the city, in the city and around the city would like to see with the park moving forward. So that consultation will go forward.

We also know obviously from the opposition member of what her views are and what she would like that west lawn to accommodate. But that will be a big part of a much bigger discussion regarding the Provincial Capital Commission.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Minister. What will the RFP be for?

Ms. Schroeder: — Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Jenna Schroeder, the executive director of the Provincial Capital Commission, and thank you for the question. The RFP that we're putting out, it's going to cover actually doing the master plan itself and the public consultation element, so both.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Ms. Schroeder. Welcome, and congratulations on your new role.

Ms. Schroeder: — Thank you.

Ms. Sarauer: — So the RFP will be redoing . . . will be about the entire PCC [Provincial Capital Commission] master plan. Can you speak a little bit more as to why this work is being done?

Ms. Schroeder: — Okay, thank you for that question. The master plan, it is reviewed every few years. So by regulation, we have to have it reviewed and updated by 2023. And then going forward from there, it's every 10 years it'll be reviewed.

Ms. Sarauer: — And as you said, the designation of the west lawn or a lawn for the purposes that have been discussed in one of my colleagues' petitions will be a piece of that work. Is that correct?

Ms. Schroeder: — It'll be part of the consultation of what we're doing, yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — What will the timeline be for the conclusion of that consultation and the creation of the new master plan?

Ms. Schroeder: — So the consultation and the rewrite of the master plan will be finished by the end of 2023.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. What third-party contracts have been made with the PCC since February 1st with respect to security?

Ms. Schroeder: — Okay, so the two security contracts that we have, one of them was with the Regina Police Service, and the second one was with a private company, SRG, Security Resource Group Inc.

Ms. Sarauer: — Are both of those contracts still ongoing?

Ms. Schroeder: — No, those contracts have been completed.

Ms. Sarauer: — Could those contracts, both of those contracts be tabled for the committee?

Ms. Schroeder: — So we can review the information. We'll have to put it through our privacy and security lens, and we'll table what we can.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. When were those contracts signed?

Ms. Schroeder: — So we don't have that information with us right now, but it can be part of what we table.

Ms. Sarauer: — What date were those contracts concluded?

Ms. Schroeder: — That can be something that we include in the information we table.

Ms. Sarauer: — How much were those contracts for? How much was the one with RPS [Regina Police Service] for, and how much was the one with SRG for?

Mr. Miller: — Greg Miller, deputy minister. Services with the Regina Police Services were \$101,000, and with SRG approximately \$30,000. But as has been said, we'll get some more of those details when we table the documents, Chair.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. And I understand you'll be tabling both of the contracts, and I do appreciate that. But could you, just for the purposes of this committee this afternoon, provide some details as to what those contracts . . . what those services were for?

Mr. Miller: — So with the engagement with RPS was specifically security associated with Frost Festival that occurred for the first time here this year. And then the engagement with SRG was to control points of access to the legislative precinct subsequent to that.

Ms. Sarauer: — With respect to the contract with SRG and the work that was done in that contract, were those control points staffed 24-7? Could you provide some more detail as to what sort of security work was done with SRG?

Mr. Miller: — So specifically with the SRG engagement, that was 24-7 control of the access point here close to the legislative precinct. And it was SRG personnel as well as personnel from Provincial Capital Commission's community safety officers complement that were doing the control points close to the legislature here.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. What was the tendering process for that contract?

Mr. Miller: — So that contract was not tendered per se. The

administration of PCC approached a number of security firms to secure the services of the SRG employees to do those control points.

Ms. Sarauer: — Sorry, so it was a sort of unofficial tendering where administration reached out to different security groups? Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Miller: — Yeah, that process was delivered by the PCC administration and calling three or four different security companies to see if they could take that on.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Which security companies were contacted?

[16:30]

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Maybe I'll start, and we'll do a little more work on the other companies. We're just kind of going off of memory. Commissionaires were contacted. SRG was contacted. And we believe there's another one or two, but he's going to have to just find that.

The issue at that time is that nobody had the capacity to do it 24-7, and the only one that did was SRG. And it was such a short time frame because it was, you know, the protest in Ottawa and things were going on around . . . threatening to go on around here, so it really didn't have an opportunity to go through a big tendering process. It was, who can we get here to secure the locations that we needed.

And as I said, two or three that we will try and track down, and we'll be here on Wednesday and bring any other further information that we can, although it may not be PCC that you want to deal with. But we can bring that information back by Wednesday.

Ms. Sarauer: — I appreciate that. I was surprised that I think commissionaires have gotten contracts like that in the past, maybe not from . . . well maybe from PCC but from other ministries as well. So I was surprised to see that it wasn't the commissionaires who ended up getting that contract. Are you saying that the reason why they did not get the contract at the time is that the turnaround time was too quick?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I would just say it was a combination of things. And the turnaround time was definitely part of it, just the human resources that they would have to have on hand. So I think it was a combination of things that some didn't feel that they could fulfill what was needed.

Ms. Sarauer: — Just . . . oh, sorry. Are you . . . Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Miller: — Yes, I have an update. So the other security company that was approached was Garda. And commissionaires were approached first in the process and indicated that they weren't available to take on that assignment.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. So just to clarify, it was the commissionaires who declined the contract?

Mr. Miller: — Yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Has the PCC done any work with SRG prior to the contract that we're discussing right now?

Ms. Schroeder: — No, PCC hasn't contracted with SRG prior to this one.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Now I know, Minister, you spoke a bit about the protests in Ottawa and then the threat in Regina and the resulting contract that we're discussing because of the heightened security issue. I understand that that particular protest in Regina, the response to that protest and the decisions that occurred with respect to security around this building and the surrounding area was the result of coordination with many different bodies, PCC being included. Could PCC speak to that experience a little bit?

Mr. Miller: — Thank you. So with respect to the deployment of what I'll describe as peace officer-adjacent resources, this was the time when, you know, in the Dominion there was many protests in many precincts. So there was a conversation between the Provincial Capital Commission, the Regina Police Service. There's a good working relationship there between the community safety officers, which are sort of on the job in the daily . . . in the external precinct here and have a good working relationship with RPS. Through those conversations the question of barricades and the deployment and resourcing of those barricades over what was an unknown period of time came up.

It was the head of what's now been established as the provincial protective services force, where there was an amalgamation of some of these services. So there was I think a high degree of awareness between the ministries and the agencies that there was some of these resources available.

So we worked with the Ministry of Environment, conservation officers, Highways in terms of their highway patrol officers, some conversations with Justice and the Sergeant-at-Arms in the building here with respect to what could be established in terms of a permit or control sort of approach, and then sustaining that I guess the operation of that over some period of time. So there was a series of I'll say different deployments from these different agencies to make sure that the barricades were in place and maintained despite sort of an unknown threat that was sort of directed towards the precinct here.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. So was it the decision of the PCC to put in place the barricades?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Maybe I'll take a swing at this. So it was, and I guess the PCC probably was the one . . . First of all, SaskBuilds were the one that deployed the barriers through SaskBuilds, and it would be the PCC that was the lead, taking advice from all those external partners.

And it all kind of started with Frost, which then happened to be about the same time as there was talk of people protesting in front of the legislature. So it really started with Frost, and then it just kind of morphed into more of a security issue for the building and the surrounding area. But again I guess you could say that it was the PCC that would make the final decision, but it was based on input from all.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Was there a cost associated with

putting in place and then removing the barriers?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — There would definitely be a cost. They didn't just arrive, so there's definitely a cost. But would it be Government Relations or PCC? And we're pretty sure it went through SaskBuilds.

Ms. Sarauer: — What about cost for PCC from a staffing perspective with respect to maintaining the security of the area? You mentioned that CSOs [community safety officer] were involved in conjunction with the third-party contractor. Could you provide some more detail to that, please?

Ms. Schroeder: — So with respect to the community safety officers, at the time we had three on staff. Should have had a full complement of five, so that did contribute to some of the overtime that we experienced. In total there was about 175 hours of overtime put in, so the rough estimate of the cost was just under \$7,000.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. And on those community safety officers I understand, pursuant to an OC [order in council] recently, that they have moved from the direction of the PCC into the provincial protective services branch. Is that correct? Could you provide some information as to why that decision was made?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So I guess, you know, I'll answer that is that it was really the decision of government to amalgamate, to consolidate all the . . . You know, whether it's the highway traffic patrol from the Ministry of Highways, whether it was the conservation officers from the Ministry of Environment, community safety officers through the PCC, to bring all that enforcement under one command centre more or less was the reason. And that was just by direction of government.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah, I understand why some of these are being folded under one branch of government. And originally when, for example, highway traffic officers were given enhanced policing powers, the government indicated that it was to address some problems around rural crime. What I don't fully understand is why officers who are working exclusively with the PCC would logically fold under that branch. Could you provide some more information about that, Minister?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So it really, as I said, it was the direction of government to pull all of the enforcement and our community safety officers all under one umbrella, actually in a way to help support under a bigger organization. We had five or six community safety officers, not a lot of support but combined with all, I think there would be more support, no reduction in services. In fact we probably think it will be enhanced into the future.

But to get too far down this line, it really would be the Minister of Policing and Corrections and Public Safety that would be the one that would answer kind of for the overall organization. We can try and answer for our five or six, but it would really be, again, direction of government driven by that minister.

[16:45]

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. And I will have the opportunity to ask that minister some questions about this, more broadly

speaking, tomorrow evening. I'm sure these other committee members will be interested in those responses too tomorrow night.

Minister, I'm wondering who will now be directing these community safety officers in their work. Does that fall under this new provincial branch? How does their operations work from day to day?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — That would be a really good question to ask the minister that will be responsible for that. I certainly am not responsible for that. We had one small part that moved over, but you know, yeah, I think that's best to ask of the minister responsible.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I'm sure all members will be tuning in.

Ms. Sarauer: — Is there not any concern about PCC administration not being able to have any input anymore with respect to the work that these CSOs are doing? In particular I think about the broader mandate of the provincial branch that they're folding under and how that could potentially differ from the work that the PCC does from day to day and the work that these CSOs do as a direct result.

Mr. Miller: — As the provincial protective services branch has stood up, the relationship between those six — we'll call them six — FTEs [full-time equivalent] and the PCC remains unchanged. So the manager that was in place is still in place daily in operations. The resource officers themselves are still deployed within the building, like physically in the footprint of the PCC operation so that there should be no change daily.

And so then the minister has described sort of, you know, the notional . . . where that heads in terms of the overall PPS [provincial protective services] and how it will evolve over time. There has been a lot of work done as that deployment occurred here in early April, to ensure that the mandate of the CSOs with respect to the precinct here in Wascana Centre, for example, remains the same. So their daily work remains the same despite the difference in the reporting structure.

And then as we said, it's the visibility there above that. We've already described that that would probably be a bit better tested with Corrections, Policing and Public Safety in terms of their vision going forward.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. So the manager of these CSOs, is that manager still located within the PCC structure?

Ms. Schroeder: — So the manager and the CSOs are within our building, our PCC building. Now we don't have a formal reporting relationship, but we are still in contact with them. So we're figuring out . . . We'll have to develop an MOU [memorandum of understanding] of what that looks like going forward.

Ms. Sarauer: — That leads me to my next question: who does that manager report to?

Mr. Miller: — So as I understand it, there is a director that has

been hired for the PPS. And I'm sorry. I don't have that name here with us. So the manager of the CSO will report up to that director now in Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

Ms. Sarauer: — So just to clarify, the manager reports to basically the top position within the PPS?

Mr. Miller: — Yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — Who is the director, whose name you don't have.

Mr. Miller: — Correct.

Ms. Sarauer: — But that's okay. I can ask the Minister for Corrections that information tomorrow.

So this transition has already occurred, is that correct?

Ms. Schroeder: — Yes, the transition was effective on April 1st of this year.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. But an MOU hasn't been drafted yet to formalize the information sharing between the CSOs and the PCC. Is that correct?

Ms. Schroeder: — Thank you for the question. We do have an MOU, but we didn't bring it with us tonight.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Could you commit to tabling that with the committee, please.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — We'll table what we can, yeah.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. God forbid, should a situation occur again that we saw recently, with the enhanced need for . . . the need for enhanced security around this building, with the change in the reporting structure for the CSOs I'm just wondering how the management of those sorts of situations would be addressed with the PCC in the future.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So I think, you know, the question is kind of how will we still have input through the Provincial Capital Commission? And what I would say is if we kind of step back to see how it worked leading up to this latest threat, I guess you would call it, and having all the different agencies work together, this really, you know, what the Minister of Corrections and Policing is doing is formalizing that relationship.

And we through the PCC will still have, can have input as to any threat. I'm sure that if there are threats, we will be notified and we will have input as to what level we think. But again it's a bigger, it's a larger enforcement body that work very, very well together to get to where we are. So it's a matter of formalizing it.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Sounds like they have been working very, very well together. Remind me again: are there any ongoing contracts for security between the PCC and any third party at this time?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — The answer is no.

Ms. Sarauer: — Are there plans for any in the future?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — So at this time, there is no contract now and there is no plan for contract, but I can't read what's going to happen into the future. And if there was another threat moving forward, there may have to be. And again, timeliness . . . It's not always possible to go through a full RFP process.

So you know, it is kind of in real time, which is what happened this time. So I can't say that it will never happen, there will never be any other security services hired into the future, but that's not our intent.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. If there were the need to hire or to contract with a third party again, would the PCC still be involved in or be the one who would be contracting those services?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Again those are kind of tough hypotheticals because we don't know what . . . If we knew, it would be a lot easier to answer, but those are really kind of hypotheticals. And we'll be taking advice from, you know, the enforcement body that would be able to probably calculate the risk like we did this past time. You know, it was a combination of all putting their heads together to calculate the risk and what the steps should be moving forward, and I don't see that changing. I mean, we'd take recommendations as we did in the past.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Minister, you mentioned the PCC's positive relationship with RPS. Could you speak more to that?

Mr. Miller: — So yeah, the relationship between the community safety officers and the RPS is, I'd describe it as daily. So typically the CSOs during a shift will have direct contact with patrol members in the division, I guess typically the south division. There's a good executive coordination too with RPS at the superintendent level. So as issues arrive within the precinct over the . . . You know, during my tenure in this file I've had good communication with the superintendent even up to the Chief of Police at times as required, so that I think will definitely continue going forward.

I think maybe some of the changes will be enhancements. And that's of course the goal of changing the structure, that there'll be an enhanced relationship in the control structure. As those other peace officer-adjacent professionals get to work together, perhaps some opportunities for sharing of training and those kinds of things so that, you know, the core function of the CSOs, as it relates to PCC, is maintained and then perhaps enhanced through this new relationship.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. And just a note. I'd like to thank you and all of your officials for all of the work that was done, in particular with respect to maintaining the safety of this building and the surrounding space during a very difficult time. I know, as we had mentioned some of the overtime, but I know that doesn't speak to all of the hours and sleepless nights that occurred from many different folks, but your folks as well with respect to just making sure that this building stayed safe and this space was one that was accessible yet safe for everybody. So thank you for that.

I want to ask a few more questions, with the time that I have left, on the master plan that's going into works. Could you speak into more detail as to . . . I understand that there's a requirement under

legislation that the master plan be reviewed in 2023. Could you speak more to what the goals are for the PCC in the work around reviewing and consulting on the new and updated master plan?

[17:00]

Ms. Schroeder: — All right. Thank you for the question. So with respect to the master plan, the Provincial Capital Commission and the predecessors, we've had a plan for the entire Wascana Centre for over 100 years. So really it's how do we protect the space that we have? How do we plan for the future of this wonderful centre that we do have and including Government House as well?

So really with the master plan, we've got three pillars with it. So there's the history and stewardship for education that continues ecological programming, community labs, museum and collections, and storytelling, is one pillar.

The second pillar is community engagement. That includes events, programming, outreach and experiences, celebrations, collaborations and partnerships, educational, ecological, and active community infrastructure.

And then the last pillar is a long-term legacy planner for the capital city that includes stewardship and development regulations and sustainable development strategies as the principal steward of PCC's assets.

So what we are looking for this time around with renewing the master plan is some specific engagement on ceremonial land use, implementing the new bylaws that we do have, and then some other topics ranging in the park and facility use for programming.

Ms. Sarauer: — Sorry. Can you repeat that last part after "implementing the new bylaws"?

Ms. Schroeder: — Other topics that are ranging in park and facility use to programming.

Ms. Sarauer: — One thing that has been important to many stakeholders and folks who have a real affinity for the park are the five pillars of use. Is it the intention of the PCC that those five pillars will remain intact through the new master plan?

Ms. Schroeder: — So with the upcoming review, we do intend on reviewing the existing five pillars, so the seat of government, research and education, cultural arts, recreation opportunities, and conservation of the environment. So we will be engaging with the public to get their thoughts on those five pillars and what can we do in the future.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. I understand that this process will go under an RFP, but I'm wondering what sort of just direction is going to be given to the successful proponent around what the consultation process will look like.

Ms. Schroeder: — All right. So in terms of the RFP itself, we are not going to be providing a whole lot of detail in it about the consultation plan. Once we have a successful proponent, that's when we will begin discussions with them about what we would like to see going forward.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. I asked when the conclusion of all of this was projected to occur. But when will the RFP be awarded?

Ms. Schroeder: — So we're projecting within two months the RFP will be awarded and work can begin.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. You also mentioned that part of the master plan review process will include implementing the new bylaws. Can you speak a bit about the new bylaws, the process that occurred for creating them, and why they were created?

Ms. Schroeder: — Okay, so the impetus for rewriting the bylaws was that on September 11th, 2020 Justice Mitchell found that the Wascana Centre bylaws contravened with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, new bylaws were drafted to ensure rights and privileges of all Saskatchewan residents are respected and protected within Wascana Centre.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. And just to clarify, are those bylaws in effect today, or are they to be made in effect at a later date?

Ms. Schroeder: — All right. Thank you for the question. So we do have a number of new bylaws that are in effect right now. There are still some old ones that are in effect, but of the new ones, we've got a framework bylaw. So that bylaw is to guide the interpretation and enforcement of all bylaws for the PCC.

We also have a permit bylaw, and that bylaw describes the process for applying for a permit from PCC, the general criteria under which the permit will be reviewed and may be granted, the terms and conditions that a permit may be subject to in Wascana Centre, and the process for the suspension and cancellation of permits.

We also have a park and open-space bylaw, and the purpose of that bylaw is to regulate the use of public park and open spaces within Wascana Centre.

And we have a commercial licence bylaw, and the purpose of this bylaw is to specify the requirements to obtain PCC commercial licence and to conduct commercial activities in Wascana Centre along with the conditions under which a commercial licence may be suspended or cancelled. And the commission regulates all land uses within Wascana Centre in accordance with the master plan and the commission bylaws and policies.

We also have an animal control bylaw, and the purpose of that bylaw is to promote the safety, health, and welfare of people; and the protection of people, animals, and property in Wascana Centre; and to ensure the humane treatment of animals.

And we have a smoking bylaw, and the purpose of this bylaw is to regulate smoking and vaping in public places in Wascana Centre.

And then the final new one is the fireworks bylaw. So the purpose of this bylaw is to regulate the use of fireworks and pyrotechnics to protect the health and safety of the public, prevent fire, and safely conduct a fireworks exhibition or pyrotechnics exhibition in Wascana Centre.

And the remaining bylaws that have not been updated, they are in the process of being reviewed so they should be finalized soon, in the coming months.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you so much for that answer. And being cognizant of the time, I have no further questions. I just want to thank you, Minister, and all of your officials for answering all of my questions this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I would just echo those thoughts. Thank you to the officials and to the committee members for allowing us to get through a third of the time that we have allotted.

The Chair: — All right. So we've reached our . . . I think we've reached our agreed-upon time for consideration of these estimates today, so now adjourn consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Government Relations. Minister, were those the final comments? All right. Ms. Sarauer, do you got anything else to say?

Ms. Sarauer: — I was remiss. I forgot to thank you, Chair, as well as all the committee staffs and the committee members for their work today, as well as Hansard and those folks on video services.

The Chair: — No, I appreciate that, and I will also thank the minister and your officials. I'd like to thank the committee, I'd like to thank Ms. Sarauer, and I'd like to thank Miranda and Hansard and Tahera. There we go. That's everybody. And with that, this committee stands recessed until 6 p.m. All right. Thank you, everyone.

[The committee recessed from 17:14 until 18:00.]

General Revenue Fund Parks, Culture and Sport Vote 27

Subvote (PC01)

The Chair: — Hello, everyone. Welcome back, committee members. We'll now begin our consideration of vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport, subvote (PC01), central management and services. Minister Ross, you're here with your officials.

As a reminder to officials, please state your name for the record before you speak, and please don't touch the microphones. The Hansard operator will turn your microphone on when you can speak. And, Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And as I've stated to the members earlier, we have three hours within this ministry for estimates. The first hour will be dedicated towards the Status of Women and the last two remaining hours we will deal with Parks, Culture and Sport.

So thank you so much. We're pleased to be here today to answer questions related to the estimates for the Status of Women office. First I would like to start the introductions with some following remarks. The officials joining me here today: Ms. Twyla MacDougall, the deputy minister, Ministry of Parks, Culture and

Sport; Jackie Demerse-Abbasi, executive director of the Status of Women; Jordan Jackle, executive director of communication and marketing; and Molly Waldman, my chief of staff.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that as we sit here or stand here today, we are on Treaty 4 territory and the traditional home of the Métis.

As I mentioned during the estimates for the . . . Oh, here we are. We're in a different spot here. And I'm pleased to present with the work of the Status of Women which contributes to growth.

Our government is committed to improving women's safety, economic participation, and prosperity. The Status of Women office works across government and with community partners to address the needs of Saskatchewan women. It serves as an advisory function providing research and policy analysis and piloting initiatives that address priority areas of concern for women across the province.

Issues impacting women across Saskatchewan are diverse and wide-ranging. To be responsive to these varying needs, the Status of Women office mandate spans topics related to economic participation and prosperity, entrepreneurship, safety, health, eliminating barriers in education, and leadership. The Status of Women office gathers information and provides insight and direction to leaders so thoughtful decisions can be made and meaningful change can happen.

Given that the mandate of the Status of Women office is women, they focus on a wide range of topics, including two major portfolios: women's economic security, participation, and prosperity; and interpersonal violence and abuse. The two go hand in hand, as without economic participation and prosperity, there is a lack of options and therefore a lack of security.

The Status of Women office has committed itself to being a lead resource in advocating for women in our province's economic growth, and empowering women could not be more relevant than right now. While women are significantly impacted by the pandemic, data shows economic recovery has occurred at a faster rate for women than men.

Saskatchewan is currently seeing some of the lowest unemployment rates for women at 4.2 per cent. This isn't to suggest that recovery has been easy, but employment rates for women and Indigenous women trending upward is something we want to continue and to build upon. We know that supporting women's economic participation and prosperity increases growth and competitiveness in our economy and secures a better quality of life for everyone.

There are many factors that impact women's economic equality, including access to equal opportunity, reducing barriers to education, especially in sectors that are male-dominated like those related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, better known as STEM.

In 2019 the Status of Women office invested in STEM research to identify outcomes and barriers. The research highlights a significant lack of mentorship throughout the education pathways in the STEM fields. To facilitate early mentorship and education opportunities, the Status of Women office was pleased

to support the Girls in STEAM — science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics — conference hosted by the Saskatchewan Science Centre, held on the International Day of Women and Girls on February the 11th.

1,600 girls in grades 6 to 9 attended this free virtual event. They represented 35 Saskatchewan communities, from Fond-du-Lac in the North to Oxbow in the South. Girls were offered a unique opportunity to hear from inspiring women and participate in activities in engineering, architecture and design, wildlife rehabilitation, and coding. Providing opportunities for young girls to see themselves represented as leaders and change-makers within different sectors is vital for the future. I always say, if you can see it, you can be it.

Diversity and leadership in representation matters. This is why the Status of Women office continues to celebrate the achievement of women throughout our province by showcasing its inspirational women leaders and mentors during International Women's Day and Women Entrepreneurs Week. The Status of Women office invested in videos for both International Women's Day and Women Entrepreneurs Week to help raise the visibility of women leaders and entrepreneurs in the province and celebrate their contributions to our economy and well-being of our community. Women from different sectors were highlighted this year, including women in STEM, education, policing, agriculture, mental health, and well-being.

I had the opportunity when we were meeting with different young girls at the Science Centre. After the workshop, I was chatting with a young girl, and I said, "You know, one day you could be sitting in my office. You could be sitting at the cabinet table." And she looked at me and said, "No, I'm going to be prime minister." I loved it. I loved it, and I thought, that's just wonderful. That's exactly what we want to hear and that's exactly why we do what we do, because it's stories like that that really prove that if you can see it, you can be it. But we need to show them.

While celebrating women's achievements are one aspect of the Status of Women's office work, it is understood that not every woman in our province has equal access to mentorship, education, and employment. This year the Status of Women office provided grants to Dress for Success in Regina and Saskatoon to support outreach goals for the next year. As you know, that is a wonderful organization that provides a hand up, not a handout. This support is vital to ensuring everyone has the opportunity to succeed, whether it is entering or re-entering the workforce, finding a support network, or gaining professional development tools to help women be job ready and to ultimately grow our economy.

Providing opportunities for community partnership and investing is only one part of the work of the Status of Women office. Much of what the Status of Women office continues to do is to provide advice to ministry partners on issues that impact women in our province. That includes advising on support for women-led businesses. In 2019 the Status of Women office invested to create a Saskatchewan advisory committee on the gender entrepreneurship gap, led by the Women Entrepreneurs Saskatchewan. The Status of Women office has worked closely with Trade and Export Development, Innovation Saskatchewan, and Immigration and Career Training on ways to best support

women entrepreneurs in enabling scale for their businesses.

As a result of this work, Trade and Export Development announced two new programs in 2021, scale up for entrepreneurs and digital literacy for entrepreneurs, to support women and entrepreneurs helping them upskill, train, and grow their business.

This advisory function extends beyond the work in employment and the economy. Now the Status of Women office is also often consulted to provide advice and research. For example, this past year it was consulted by the government ministries on the importance of child care support for women, as well in ensuring inclusive and gender-sensitive language is included in policy and programs across our government.

The Status of Women office also provides advice, research, and support for cross-ministry initiatives related to interpersonal violence and abuse, including the gender-based violence. The Status of Women office and the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General have partnered with the Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan, known as PATHS, to develop an online course to educate employers and staff on how to support colleagues experiencing interpersonal violence outside of the workplace. Together they have invested 59,000 to move training online.

Now the Status of Women office has been working to support the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General in responding to the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. While the Status of Women office is not the lead on this file, the Status of Women office assists in producing the response to the national inquiry paper. It also planned and facilitated engagement sessions with Indigenous organizations on how to address safety of Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQ [two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transexual, queer and/or questioning] people, and how to best collaborate and support economic reconciliation.

The Status of Women office also supports the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General and Corrections, Policing and Public Safety on the continuing development of a provincial public awareness campaign on interpersonal violence and abuse. The second phase of this campaign was released in January, 2022, and the highlights different forms of abuse can take, including subtle forms of controlling behaviour. Now the aim of this phase was to educate bystanders about the fact that abuse is not always obvious, and features television and social media ads, get that message across. On Facebook alone, the campaign has so far reached more than 550,000 people, and overall the campaign has generated 2.2 million views. Similar to phase one, phase two has been translated into Cree and Dene.

As well, the Status of Women office continues to co-chair the inter-ministerial committees on interpersonal violence and abuse, supporting and advising on activities related to interpersonal violence and abuse. The Status of Women office does not have input into funding programs and services led by ministry partners, but instead helps to facilitate cross-ministry initiative. This includes the work on the expansion of the Philadelphia Model, otherwise known as the victim's advocate case review project. This initiative gives civilian sexual assault experts access to police sexual assault files to determine challenges and identify

opportunities to improve investigation outcomes.

In 2019 the Status of Women office, the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General, and the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety partnered with Sexual Assault Services Saskatchewan and the Regina Police Service to first pilot this initiative.

I'm just about done.

This important work continues at the federal, provincial, and territorial level of the Status of Women table. Saskatchewan hosted the federal, provincial, and territorial meetings in December where issues related to addressing gender-based violence and supporting women in the economy were discussed at great length. The federal government continues to lead the development of a 10-year national action plan to end gender-based violence where provinces and territories were consulted and able to have input.

As you see, the Status of Women office is hard at work to create a province where all women can succeed and further grow our economy. With that I will turn it back over to you, the Chair. Thank you. very much.

[18:15]

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister. Substituting for Betty Nippi-Albright is Jennifer Bowes. If you've got any opening comments, please say them now. And if not, the floor is yours.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be brief because we have very limited time here today, just an hour for consideration of these estimates for Status of Women. I want to say welcome to you, Minister, good to see you, and to your officials. Jackie, we haven't met yet. I think you must be relatively new to your role, at least since last year. Good to see you.

I'll get right into the questions. The first, we see that total funding for the Status of Women's office in this year's budget is 375,000. And would you please let the committee know the specific breakdown in spending for that \$375,000?

Ms. MacDougall: — Hi, Twyla MacDougall. And I can certainly talk about the budget numbers. Jackie is well versed in the program delivery, but I'll talk budget. So yes, the 375 is consistent to last year. 119,000 of that is for . . . Oh, that was last year's. Let me just pull it off and make sure I've got the right numbers for you.

For 2022 the budget of 340 — 215,000 in salary costs and then 125,000 in administrative costs. Oh, just a minute. That's still Social Services. Thank you. I got to the wrong days. Okay, we're still close. Okay, 260,000 for salaries, 78,400 allocated to projects and initiatives that support priority areas such as Minister Ross had said in research and awareness activities, and just over 36,000 is for contracts and operational costs.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Thanks. And so how many FTEs in the Status of Women office?

Ms. MacDougall: — There are two permanent full-time positions, and then we almost every year are lucky enough to

staff a summer student or a Johnson-Shoyama student. So right now we actually have four individuals in the office, but two are permanent full-time.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, so two paid positions.

Ms. MacDougall: — They're all paid. Just two permanent, yes.

Ms. Bowes: — Yes. Yeah, okay. Thank you. And so you had mentioned then 78,400 for projects and initiatives. And can you break that down for me by project and initiative?

Ms. MacDougall: — So they will vary from year to year depending on the priority, and we have not finalized our priorities yet this year. I could give you the breakdown from '21-22.

Ms. Bowes: — No, that's fine. Thank you.

Ms. MacDougall: — Okay.

Ms. Bowes: — And then you said about 36,000 for contracts and operations?

Ms. MacDougall: — Yes.

Ms. Bowes: — And can you break that down?

Ms. MacDougall: — That would be items like marketing costs, website costs, any outside contracting . . . [inaudible] . . . Again this is last year's though, but yeah, and then just sort of your general operating, telephone, that type of thing.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. I might come back to that if I have a little more time. We'll see what happens. But for now I'll just move on.

Minister, in the annual report for 2020-2021 under the government goals section on page 18, the Status of Women office is described as follows, "a catalyst within government to raise awareness of issues affecting women to ensure gender considerations are integrated into government policy making, legislation, and program development." Given this description, I'd like to know if the Status of Women office has undertaken a gendered analysis of the government's budget for 2022 to '23, and if so, if there is a gender-equitable distribution of budget benefits.

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — Thank you. Jackie Demerse-Abbasi, executive director of the Status of Women office. The Status of Women office does Gender-based Analysis Plus for ministries across government. We don't apply it to the budget process, but we do offer it to any ministry who requests it, and we're all trained in gender-based analysis.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. Okay, I understand. Then it's not a matter of course, it's just at the request of the specific ministry. So I guess on that basis I'm wondering if, you know, a gendered analysis of the government's annual budget is not standardly undertaken by the Status of Women office, then just how specifically does the office go about assessing and ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into government policy making, legislation, and program development, as is noted in the annual report?

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — So the way in which the Status of Women office does the majority of its work is through inter-ministerial committees across government. And in doing so, for instance, on the inter-ministerial committee of interpersonal violence and abuse, we often have a gendered lens to everything that we do, of course. And so we kind of represent the gender-based violence aspect of work that's done at that committee level.

In addition, we have our inter-ministerial committee on advisors of women's policy, which actually has representation from ministries across government. And we use that forum to bring up any pressing issues or any areas of opportunity for us to look into or do a deeper dive and have discussions about. And so that's primarily how we affect gender policy and programs and services, as well as legislation, through those mechanisms.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Thanks, and pardon my ignorance, just don't know quite how this works. So with these inter-ministerial committees, how are these formed? And sorry if I missed this, but does the Status of Women office . . . Like, how do they become involved exactly in these committees?

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — So the Status of Women office is a co-lead for inter-ministerial committee on interpersonal violence and abuse and has been so for quite some time. It was established a while ago. For the inter-ministerial committee on advisors of women's policy, that's actually led by the Status of Women office, so we initiate that work and we set the framework for that work going forward. But we work really closely with our ministry partners. We are members of other working groups across government, which includes missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and other inter-ministerial working groups.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. And are there . . . Like, can you tell me which other groups are all, you know, the Status of Women is involved in? Are you able to disclose that to me?

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — Yeah, we don't have . . . like, I don't have a comprehensive list in front of me but we do sit on a number of internal working groups, for instance Indigenous working priorities group. And we also sit on a number of external committee groups as well with our external stakeholders. And so the committee work is quite extensive for our office.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, great. I totally appreciate you don't have a list at your fingertips, but would ask that that be tabled, the list of groups, working groups that the Status of Women office is involved with.

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — No, not at this time.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, and is there a reason that that wouldn't be tabled or . . .

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — Yeah, it's for the minister's information.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. So moving on, I note also that the Status of Women office's web page has published some stats relating to women's economic participation in Saskatchewan which come directly from Statistics Canada. Under the employment section, it's acknowledged that women are concentrated in occupations

related to traditional gender roles with the top three female-dominated occupations listed as, the first is health care and social assistance with 81 per cent of workers in those occupations being women. And then the second is educational services with 67.6 per cent being women. The third is accommodation and food services with 59.3 per cent being women. And so as we're all aware, many of the lowest paying jobs are found in traditionally female-dominated sectors such as these, which is why the vast majority of provincial governments across Canada have decided to implement pay equity legislation.

And so, Minister, for over a year now the official opposition has been tabling petitions signed by Saskatchewan residents calling on the government to introduce pay equity legislation. So such legislation would require all Saskatchewan employers, not just public service but private sector, to proactively implement and maintain equitable pay for women.

There's a clear need for this legislation as we know Saskatchewan women are still earning on average nearly \$5 less an hour than Saskatchewan men. And so, you know, the reality is that Saskatchewan is a laggard on this front as we remain one of only four provinces that has not implemented pay equity legislation in Canada. And to date, hundreds of Saskatchewan residents have signed on to this petition from across the province.

And so during last year's estimates, Minister, you had committed to having the Status of Women office complete a jurisdictional scan around pay equity legislation. And then in November of last year you and I had run into each other in the rotunda and I'd asked you if that scan had been completed and if so, if you would be willing to meet with me to discuss the results of that scan. You had indicated it had been completed, but you had declined to meet with me. So as a result, our caucus had filed freedom of information requests in an official attempt to access a copy of the jurisdictional scan. And then on December 15th of last year we received a letter from your ministry refusing this request.

So my question here is, Minister, if you won't share the results of this scan with me as the critic and don't seem to see value in working together in a bipartisan way on this important issue, will you at least commit publicly to sharing the results of this jurisdictional scan as well as any associated recommendations with the people of Saskatchewan, again, hundreds of whom have signed our petition?

Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Chair, if I may. I'm sorry.

The Chair: — Go ahead.

Mr. McLeod: — I'm just struggling to find the tie-in to the estimates that we are discussing at this committee. I understand there was a loose reference to the estimates last year. But I understand you have an issue that you're passionate about, Ms. Bowes, but I'm looking for a tie-in to the estimates that we're set to discuss here today.

Ms. Bowes: — So the tie-in to the estimates then would be, is any of this spending from the previous year's budget or this year's budget associated with research around this jurisdictional scan for pay equity that had been committed to by the minister last year? And that would be my question related to this year's estimates.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — You know, we have looked at what other provinces are doing, and after looking at jurisdictions across the country, it is clear that every jurisdiction in Canada is doing it differently. There isn't one size that fits all.

And so because of that, you know, we feel that what we have in place in Saskatchewan today, which is our employment Act that stipulates that employees of one sex cannot be paid less than another, and that also relates to their, you know, sexual orientation. It relates to their religion and age.

So we do have that kind of safety for employees and legislation in place in Saskatchewan. So we are very comfortable with the legislation that we have in place here in Saskatchewan, ensuring that people are treated fairly.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. That wasn't an answer to my question. So again, is there is any . . . Are there any dollars associated with the budget for Status of Women this year that are going to be related to research or advocacy around pay equity legislation for Saskatchewan women?

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — So legislation is just one aspect, obviously, of the gender wage gap. And so the Status of Women office takes a holistic perspective on looking at this issue and looking at, for instance, distribution of women and men across industries, access to education, wage transparency, intersecting identities, and you know, women's overrepresentation in part-time work. It's quite complex of a topic, right? So we take our time in terms of understanding the complexity of the wage gap and ways to address it in a fulsome manner.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. Yes, thanks. And I do appreciate, you know, that it's a complex subject. It certainly is. It's just, you know, I think it is, as I've said before many times, part of the puzzle and part of the answer to the issues around gender inequality, especially in terms of payment and the gender wage gap.

So I still didn't get a direct answer to that question, I guess I'll note for the record. And, Minister, I understand and I appreciate that there is a mechanism available to, you know, as the case may be, women who want to initiate a complaint and have a complaint based on being paid less than men for work of equal value.

[18:30]

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Because there's a human rights thing.

Ms. Bowes: — Yes. So there is human rights legislation, but as you know it's a complaint-based process. So it puts the onus on the worker, the female worker in this situation, to undertake that process, which I'm sure you know can be quite lengthy and quite time consuming. And you know, there are barriers, I guess is what the argument would be, to accessing that process.

And so the idea with pay equity legislation is that instead of being reactive, as the case is with the current legislation and mechanism in place, it's proactive. And so I know I sound like a bit of a broken record here. I know you've heard me say these things before, but I guess, you know, I wonder why proactive mechanisms would not be considered more valuable in this instance by the office for the Status of Women.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well you know, we are working proactively because the research that is being undertaken within the Status of Women office is ensuring that women have opportunities, which is why we, you know, facilitated the STEM — or STEAM, they call it — STEAM workshop for girls. Because, you know, we have to really change the dial and ensure that young girls — because that's the age group as you heard, you know, when they're in elementary school going into high school that they start to see themselves as not in a part-time job — but that in fact they have the ability to see themselves in a career.

So that's why we facilitate that workshop. We have the ability to touch 1,600 girls in this province, and that's pretty big. And they came away being totally inspired because that's the kind of work we get to do.

You know, and the work we do with WESK [Women Entrepreneurs Saskatchewan], with women entrepreneurs, again, you know, when you see the work that's being undertaken, we have really strong, capable, competent women in this province that are stepping out, building businesses, and employing other women too, which is just excellent.

So you know, we have to change how women see themselves, not as victims but as victorious women who are not afraid to go out, start a business, and really add to our economy. And that I must say, we have some of the most inspirational women, and that's what we highlighted on our website. And that's a real opportunity for other women to say, I can do that.

Ms. Bowes: — Yeah. Thanks, Minister. And this is very reminiscent of our discussion from last year, and you know, I agree. You know, that's a very important component, is ensuring that, you know, girls and women are able to get into STEM and other sort of male-dominated lines of work that are typically higher paying.

But still it doesn't really address the issue that, really the systemic issue that women's work, traditional women's work is chronically undervalued. And I guess that's what I continue to ask you to look at as a part of the puzzle here, is it's great . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — So what do you consider women's work? I don't want to be adversarial, but what is women's work?

Ms. Bowes: — Well I mean, this isn't my definition, but traditionally, you know, as we've seen in the stats on the Status of Women website, we see women still persistently concentrated in certain areas, in certain sectors of work. And so the ones that I sort of just went through listing here are the, you know, highest concentrations.

And when I say women's work, I don't mean that women can only do that work obviously. I just mean that the case is that women are highly concentrated in these sectors. And the reality is that in these sectors most, well maybe not most, but many of the jobs contained within these sectors are the lowest paying jobs in our province and really generally in our society.

And so that's what I mean about the chronic undervaluation of women's work, is because we see jobs — just for instance like, say, continuing care aides or say child care workers or library

workers for instance — where the work that they do is simply not valued as highly as many male-dominated jobs. And we know that. I mean this is not a disputed thing, I don't think. And so that's what I mean about women's work, I guess if you want to call it that, and the chronic undervaluation of work where women are highly concentrated. So I'll move on.

I would ask, Minister, that I know last year there was a different executive director in the seat here, and certainly at that time we had a discussion about what information is reported on the Status of Women website. And I recall your predecessor, Jackie, talking about how they were fleshing out that website and how there would be reports available on that website.

But I actually took a look at that and went through the website. I found some really great information, but I didn't find any reports per se. And so I'm flagging that. I know that was the impression I was left with last year and hoped to see . . . And I guess I would ask, is that the intention of the office to publish any reported findings undertaken by the office on the website for the public to access?

Ms. Demerse-Abassi: — So we've done a number of improvements taking into feedback that we've received, not just from yourself but from other people, about reinvigorating our website and having more information on what our office actually does and how it works across government. That advisory capacity piece is often not highlighted enough in the work that we do. And so we re-envisioned the website. We still include gender-equity indicators on the website from what we can collect in terms of the data that's publicly available always. We have done the STEM research paper obviously, and that's just awaiting to be put on the website as well. And so that's obviously an addition.

We did focus this year on the quick-exit button. That was not only . . . We pushed for that not only for our website but for across Saskatchewan.ca for women and children who may find themselves in that situation. And so really it was added, you know, initiated by our office as an improvement, recognizing the need for victims of interpersonal violence and abuse, as a way of seeking out services on Saskatchewan.ca, that may need to exit quickly if they're searching out those services and need to get away from that.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. So I understand that, you know, part of the research undertaken by the Status of Women office is conducting jurisdictional scans. And is that something that will be posted on the Status of Women website? Because I couldn't see anything of that variety when I looked.

Ms. Demerse-Abassi: — Yeah, it's advice to the minister for the most part, the interjurisdictional scans that we undertake.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay. And so then am I correct in understanding that that will not at any point be information that is made accessible to the public through the Status of Women office, who in essence are funding the operations of this office through taxpayer dollars?

Ms. Demerse-Abassi: — So a lot of the work that we do in terms of providing advice and research is done to our ministry partners when they ask for it, right. And so advice and research that we'd

done, in regards to women and child care supports, we worked with our ministry partners in providing them that support as well. Any, you know, any information that we find with regard to women and small business we help and work with our ministry partners and provide them information and direction and advice on how to move forward in some of those areas. And so a lot of that information that we spend our time doing is shared with other ministries.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. I'm going to move on a bit here. So, Minister, as you're aware, Saskatchewan has the highest rates of domestic violence in the entire country. Thousands of women and children, as I'm told in my critic role from the heads of shelters across the province, thousands of women and children are turned away from shelters each year in our province due to a lack of beds, which is the result of insufficient operational funding.

And so, as has recently been noted with great disappointment not just by the official opposition but by organizations like SOFIA House, this year's budget once again failed to include any operational funding at all for second-stage shelters, which provide longer term housing for women and children fleeing domestic violence.

Back in 2020 our Justice critic had asked in committee about operational funding for second-stage shelters, and at that time the Minister of Justice had indicated that a review of operational funding for second-stage shelters was under way through the Status of Women office. And so I'm wondering what were the findings and recommendations stemming from this report, and have those findings been made public?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Second-stage housing is not handled within this ministry. The Status of Women will be providing information and research for ministries, but we do not fund second-stage housing. So that would be dealt with both within the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Services. So that would be a budget question that would go towards them to do, you know, to answer the questions in regards to the estimates this evening. That would be better served put to either the Minister of Justice or the Minister of Social Services.

Ms. Bowes: — Right, so I'm not asking about the Status of Women office funding second-stage shelters themselves. I'm asking about a report that I understand was being undertaken and using dollars from the Status of Women budget. And so I'm asking specifically about the funding that the Status of Women office put towards that project, and whether or not the money used for that project resulted in a public report.

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — So I'm not sure if you're referencing maybe the money that came from the federal government last year, and to supports from women and gender equity Canada that supported emergency shelter funding for COVID-19. And that's how our office was involved in that. But we haven't been asked by the Ministry of Justice to provide any reports on second-stage shelters.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, so at no point, in your understanding, have you been asked to do so?

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — No.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. Just moving on from that, Minister, we know that COVID has disproportionately impacted and affected women, especially poor women, and we've been seeing associated losses in income and growing wage inequality. I know you mentioned that, you know, women, as you said in your opening remarks, have been recovering more readily than men, I think you said.

And I know you referenced the unemployment rates for women in Saskatchewan being some of the lowest in Canada at 4.2 per cent, and I understand that aspect of it. But I'm looking to know, you know, how is the Status of Women office looking to address these impacts related to COVID in terms of the recommendations that have been or recommendations that will be made to government? And that's in terms of, again, associated losses in income and growing wage inequality.

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — So in terms of the economic recovery from COVID-19, obviously in quoting some of those numbers, we're definitely on . . . Women are trending upstream for employment, which is really great. But we know that a lot more work needs to be done.

And we do help provide, for instance, with the Ministry of Education, we helped provide information on how child care helps support women in the workplace in making those decisions to engage in the federal agreements for early learning and child care supports. And so that's one way that we've helped kind of support the recovery from COVID-19.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thanks. I wanted to ask a few other questions around . . . You had mentioned, Minister, in your opening remarks about the partnership with PATHS, and you had noted the \$59,000 invested, together I assume between the Status of Women office and PATHS. And how much of that was committed by the Status of Women office, that total of 59,000?

[18:45]

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi — Thirty-four thousand dollars was committed in '20-21.

Ms. Bowes: — Thirty-four thousand by your office?

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi — By our office, yes.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, excellent. Thanks. I also was wondering, again based on your opening remarks, you talked about the Face the Issue campaign that your office has been involved with around domestic violence. And you did, you know, note a couple statistics there around sort of number of views, basically the reach of the campaign online.

I did wonder though, are you able to measure or able to track any sort of firm outcomes associated with that campaign beyond sort of social media reach or online reach? For example, are you in any way able to measure whether that will lead to a drop in rates of domestic violence in Saskatchewan, and if so, have you noticed any drop?

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi — So we receive analytics obviously on the success of the campaign, and we hear anecdotal stories of course from those who might have been impacted by the

campaign. A large portion of our work also happens with community partners and stakeholders in receiving feedback on the campaign itself and any kind of impacts that it might have in the community.

In terms of hard measurables, at this point it's just about raising awareness and education and shifting that conversation, right, having that conversation about interpersonal violence and abuse in our communities. And that's the focus of the campaign at this point in time.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thanks. And I guess also just wondering too about this campaign. So what is the dollar value commitment from the Status of Women office towards this campaign specifically?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Do you want from both part 1 and part 2?

Ms. Bowes: — Sure. Thanks.

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — The Status of Women office initially committed \$50,000 for the first phase of the interpersonal violence campaign. And subsequent to that, every year after for the campaign, the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General is supporting \$200,000 towards the campaign. So the Status of Women office made the initial investment in the first phase, and the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, and Corrections and Policing, are continuing with that investment.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thanks. And then can you tell me, like, what is the plan, I guess, going forward with that campaign? Is it like a set time frame that you have that you're going to kind of keep going with this campaign, or what is the plan there?

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — So right now we know it's going to be roughly a five-year, a five-phase plan in terms of raising public awareness. The details of the next phase we're still discussing. We want to gauge what's happening in the community, of course, with our stakeholders first, to kind of understand where those needs are. But it is a five-year phased plan.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thanks.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — The second phase had a bit of a call to action, and I think that was what was really, I think, very beneficial. Because the first one was very educational information. But the second one is, if you see it, and then you'd say, now what? What am I supposed to do, just stand there and watch? So at the end there was contact numbers and things like that for the person. So it was a real call to action, so it really built upon and it was very successful in that respect.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. Bouncing around a bit because I'm running out of time. But I'm just curious to know, does the Status of Women office have, like, do you have physical space, like a physical office? Or where are you located? Where do you work out of?

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — We are located with the Ministry of Parks, Culture, Sport.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, okay. So you just sort of have an office within an office?

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — Yeah, so we have our offices within the building of Parks, Culture, Sport.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, okay. Great, thanks. Good to know.

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — Yeah, and Parks, Culture, Sport covers the cost of having us . . .

Ms. Bowes: — Housed?

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — Housed.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, great. No, that's good to know. I wanted to know too. I noticed again looking at your website — just was going over that and taking a look at some of some new information from the year before and just what's remained the same — but I see that, you know, you have a number of stakeholders listed on the website, and they're wonderful stakeholders but rather limited in number. And so I'm curious to know how your office determines which stakeholders will be engaged.

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — So our office, it just depends on where our focus is. And obviously we have the women and the economy piece, and we've got interpersonal violence and abuse, and so our stakeholders are focused in those primary areas. But we do a number of outreach. So I think pre-COVID numbers, we did about 106 engagements over a six-month period. So not all of our engagements are going to be listed on the website, that's for sure. So we're doing a lot of background work that's not necessarily listed on the website in and of itself. But some of our primary stakeholders are kind of within those two realms.

Ms. Bowes: — Right. And I guess building off that, I mean I certainly can understand with a budget of 375,000, you have to be somewhat selective with where you spend your dollars, but obviously can notice that, you know, a lot of the focus appears to be directed toward women entrepreneurs and women in STEM, which is great, but just wondering how your office determines exactly what those priorities will be. Like for instance in this case, under economic participation and prosperity, we see, at least from what I can tell, quite a heavy focus on entrepreneurship, as I said. And so how is it that that . . . And, sorry, women in STEM. So how is that selected as the priority areas of focus?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well that's where we want to see women grow. And we know that women are, they're prepared to take the chance, become entrepreneurs. When we have the meetings with different women organizations that represent the different entrepreneurs, they feel that it works for them. They end up having a work-life balance. They have the opportunity to kind of grow. So that's where, and we know that they want to be able to, you know, provide for themselves, provide for their families, and be able to be great contributors to the economy. So it really fits very well.

We also know that when women have economic security, it really helps with their social security also. But we also, as you see, we do also focus on the interpersonal violence and so we have dedicated a lot of time and energy working with the other ministries within these fields.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. And I mean, I certainly agree with you. You know, you said when women have economic security it helps with social security. And I mean, we all agree there. And I think it is important to encourage women, girls and women, to enter STEM certainly and to take on entrepreneurship as well where possible.

But we certainly know that just the reality is that the majority of women in our province may not be able to have those opportunities. And so I guess my question is, for the upcoming year with that 375,000 that is allocated for the office, will there be any priorities set around economic participation for women who either are not able or choose not to be engaged in STEM or entrepreneurship?

Ms. MacDougall: — Okay. I guess I'll take this as an answer. So I believe — and I'm sitting once removed; lucky enough to have Jackie with the expertise in the area — but I believe currently we do do more than just STEM and entrepreneurs. And I think evidence would be, for example, the child care research that we did. That's to help women with employment right across the sector.

What we really rely on are our stakeholders and our ministry partners to help us determine what the priorities will be, so we certainly work through them to determine those.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. I'm running a little short here. I'll look to the Chair to see if I have a few more minutes left?

The Chair: — Yes, you got a couple more minutes, yeah.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. I just wanted to come back to something we chatted about last year, Minister. We had talked . . . I had sort of brought forward to you the issue in Saskatchewan with extremely high rates of sexual violence, which you know very well, and just some proactive measures that the government could be looking at to address those extremely high rates.

I know we had a discussion last year briefly about whether, you know, mandatory curriculum around consent would be a recommendation that your office might consider bringing forward to appropriate ministries with the government. And I was wondering if that's something that the Status of Women office has taken into consideration, if that's something that will be brought forward as a recommendation.

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — To your specific question about talking about consent in curriculum and healthy relationships, we just actually met with our Ministry of Education colleagues a few weeks ago to have a conversation about how to have that gender-inclusive, sensitive language, as well as having discussions about interpersonal violence and abuse and things related to healthy relationships and consent.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, thank you. . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Pardon?

Ms. MacDougall: — We've also talked to Advanced Education for the post-secondary sector, yes.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, that's great. I'm really, really happy to hear

that.

Ms. MacDougall: — So we're working on it, yes.

Ms. Bowes: — I think that's fantastic. Okay. Thank you very much. One more, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: — Yeah, quickly.

Ms. Bowes: — All right. Thanks for your indulgence. I'm wondering too, you talked about the work done in collaboration with Regina police on the Philadelphia Model, the pilot there. And I think again, like really great initiative. I wonder if your office is aware of that pilot being expanded to any other police services in Saskatchewan?

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — Yes, yes . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — You go ahead.

Ms. Demerse-Abbasi: — No, sorry. No, I have it right in front of me. So the Saskatoon Sexual Assault Centre is looking into piloting that program. And I know that there's conversations happening in two other communities. I think Moose Jaw is one of them.

Ms. Bowes: — Okay, fantastic. Well I will cede my time here. Thank you so much for taking my rapid-fire questions. It was good to see you again, Minister, and great to meet you, Jackie. And very nice to meet you as well. I can't remember, were you here last year?

Ms. MacDougall: — No. Last year they only allowed one official.

Ms. Bowes: — Oh yes, you're right. Of course.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Last year was very different.

Ms. Bowes: — Yeah. Well thank you again very much to the minister for taking my questions and to the officials for your time. I know there's a lot of time that goes into preparing for these estimates and thanks so much for your good work with the office.

The Chair: — Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Bowes. Substituting for Betty Nippi-Albright is Matt Love. Minister, no need to introduce your officials, but I'll tell you what, if you're very brief . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Okay. Are we not having a break to change out? Or no?

The Chair: — We can have a recess for a couple of minutes if you want, sure. We'll recess for two minutes. Thanks.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — All right. We've returned from our recess. As I said, sitting in for Betty Nippi-Albright is Matt Love. Minister, if you could make your opening comments, and try to keep them brief. All right, take care.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well thank you very much, and I will be brief. And what I'll have is, instead of spending a lot of time introducing the support staff that we have with us this evening, when they come forward to answer questions, I will have them introduce themselves.

So thank you, everyone, for being here, and thank you very much for allowing me to be able to talk about the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. Our government's direction and budget for 2022-23 is focused on protecting and strengthening our province and carefully managing spending, while investing in priority programs and services to support a growing economy. The Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport contributes to making Saskatchewan an attractive place to work, raise a family, and play, with the ministry supporting economic growth and enhancing the quality of life and well-being of the people of this province.

Throughout the pandemic, our parks provide safe places for Saskatchewan residents to get out and enjoy the natural beauty that this province has to offer. We also continue to support a range of sports, arts, and heritage activities that ensure healthy, vibrant communities.

I'll touch on all these pieces in a moment, but first I'd like to talk about a significant item in our 2022-23 budget that uniquely positioned our ministry to support growth in our province and our economy and assist in Saskatchewan industries, including some sectors hit hard by the pandemic. This year we increased our investment in Creative Saskatchewan feature film and television production program, with total funds available for the grant will be increased from 2 million to 10 million in 2022-23, helping to draw more and larger projects to the province.

The rising popularity of streaming services has resulted in a high demand, large production volume for content, providing significant potential to attract this investment. Presentations by Saskatchewan media production industry, known as SMPIA [Saskatchewan Media Production Industry Association], identified that funding of this level would allow for increased production in the province, with projects large enough to leave a positive impact on our economy. Creative Saskatchewan and SMPIA estimate that this investment will lead to 50 million in film and television investment and more in economic output.

The increased film and television production will result in spinoff spending in sectors, such as growing IT [information technology] and digital industries, as well as support those that had been hit hard by the pandemic, such as arts, culture, and the hospitality sectors. It will result in additional economic activities across the province and also make use of a truly remarkable asset in the Saskatchewan production studios, which is being renamed the John Hopkins Regina Sound Stage, honouring the former CEO [chief executive officer] for the Regina Chamber of Commerce who passed away earlier this year. As we all know, John was a strong advocate for economic growth in our capital city and our province, and renaming the sound stage after John, I think, is a wonderful homage to a wonderful man.

Streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video are constantly in need of new content, and we're ready to provide it. The previous Saskatchewan film employment tax credit focused on funding labour only, which allowed for some of that funding

to leave the province. Creative Saskatchewan production grant was set up in 2013-2014, ensuring the money stays in the province, and allows for other eligible expenses to include goods, services, along with labour. For example, things like restaurant meals, hotel stays across the province for film crews are eligible under the production grant, and those meals and nights in hotels will cover this cost. Again this funding stays in Saskatchewan.

An excellent economic impact document was put forward by Saskatchewan media production industry, which is known as SMPIA, and Creative Saskatchewan for this additional funding. So this is why this was allotted. The expanded grant we see today is a result of these discussions. And that's how hard work begins, and that's how we work together. The application window for the 2022-23 Creative Saskatchewan production grant will open this spring.

It's an exciting time in our province in that our provincial parks are also ready for growth. We saw record-breaking visitation at our provincial parks in 2021, and we continue to invest in infrastructure and offer opportunities to grow those numbers even more. Relatively new to our parks system, we put a lot of planning and effort into providing winter activities this past year, and we continue to promote four-season accommodation and programming for people's experiences.

Winter activities were planned in eight provincial parks. For the first time ever, Camp-Easy yurts offerings were available for online reservations, and it seemed people warmed up to the idea of winter camping — very popular this winter. A whole host of activities were available for our parks this winter, including snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, tobogganing, skating, ice maze walks, ice fishing, fat-tire bike trails, crokicurl. The list goes on. Food services were also made available. Winter activities, camping activities, programming supports each year-round businesses in our provincial parks and stimulate our local economies across Saskatchewan.

As visitation continues to increase in our parks, providing a high-quality experience remains a priority. We want to ensure provincial park facilities and infrastructure meets the growing needs and expectations of our park visitors. And with that, Mr. Chair, we are open for questions.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister. Mr. Love, if you've got any opening comments, please make them. Otherwise the floor is yours.

Mr. Love: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. And thanks to all committee members and all the officials who are here this evening. I'll try to learn your names as you answer questions and as we get to dig into some of this content that we have before us tonight.

But just initially, thanks to the work that you do. You know, I think I said something like this last year too in this meeting, but this is kind of a fun critic area as we take a lot of pride in our parks, in our, you know, cultural institutions, arts, arts organizations and institutions. And there's a lot of good to celebrate in Saskatchewan that we export to the world.

I'm going to start with just some questions about the ministry, about what happened to the ministry itself. And I'm just curious. How does the ministry account and how is it reflected — I hope

I have the right . . . yeah, this is the year in front of me — in the estimates before us, the increasing cost of inflation? Like, I guess both within the ministry and within the bodies, such as parks, SK Arts, how can we see the impact of the rising costs reflected in the estimates before us?

Ms. MacDougall: — Twyla MacDougall, deputy minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, and I will certainly be glad to take that. Sometimes we have to absorb inflationary costs. In the parks system, however though, with the commercial revolving fund and having the citizens of Saskatchewan actually fund 70 per cent of the costs for the operation of the parks, we're able to review annually some of those revenue and fee increases, always making sure that camping remains affordable for the families. But that's one way we capture and help out in the inflationary pressures.

Mr. Love: — So is the ministry or any of the bodies within the ministry impacted by things like rising fuel costs? I've noticed a couple, you know, budget lines here that have some changes, some increases this year, things like goods and services within parks, central services within the ministry. We see like, you know, some sizable increases. Are any of those, would you say, impacted by rising inflationary costs or fuel costs?

Ms. MacDougall: — Most certainly some of those estimates are impacted, but we do our best to either absorb them or set priorities in other areas.

Mr. Love: — And I guess the question is, like, do you budget for that? Like, so for the budget year '22-23, do you budget for those costs going up?

Ms. MacDougall: — We definitely have to, in particular our parks operations, right? They're very high in expense costs, and so we do budget for that. Each park actually helps prepare a budget and then we roll it up here in the head office.

Mr. Love: — And I'm curious, Twyla, what are the big drivers of inflationary increases within parks?

Ms. MacDougall: — Big drivers? They would be for sure your . . . I would say pretty much everything that you can think of, right — fuel, supplies, even our capital. We've had to rethink our capital investments because of, you know, supplier issues, that type of thing. I don't think we really . . . I think we pretty much are impacted by all of them.

Mr. Love: — Yes, so when you say capital, I mean like you've got a capital project planned, a big improvement to a park, maybe a new facility being built. So you're acknowledging that you have to anticipate those increased costs and you budget for them ahead of time.

[19:15]

Ms. MacDougall: — That's correct, we do. And if, you know, if we're out in our budget a little bit, we'll then adapt our capital in particular. You know, another very high expense for us is firewood.

Mr. Love: — Oh yeah.

Ms. MacDougall: — Power is high, so those are a few other

pieces where we're anticipating inflationary prices.

Mr. Love: — I'm wondering if the minister has any comments on this as far as within your ministry, the big drivers for inflationary costs? I'm just wondering if you want to comment on the same question.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — No, I'm fine. I think Twyla answered it quite succinctly.

Mr. Love: — Okay. Moving on, I want to ask about pre-budget consultations that would have been considered when putting these estimates together. In particular, did the Finance minister consult with your ministry? Was there consultation between Finance and Parks, Culture and Sport on the PST expansion?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — One of the things, because you've never had the opportunity to sit on treasury board, it's an onerous task, to say the least. And when the decisions are being made, there's been a full discussion with all the ministries on how is this going to be seen and what will the reaction be, but it's taken into a complete scope of within each ministry when taxation or anything like that changes, right. And so yeah, it is taken into account very seriously.

Mr. Love: — So the Finance minister consulted with you about the impact of imposing PST on parks, sports, and entertainment. And what was your response? Like how did you reflect the impact of this on the organizations that will be impacted by these decisions?

Ms. Caswell: — Candace Caswell, assistant deputy minister of stewardship. We did a lot of work with the arts community in advance of the budget with regards to our Bouncing Back from COVID campaign that's coming up in the coming months, specifically as a way to help drive people back into attending the various cultural and arts events across the province, specifically looking at trying to drive revenues within the industry itself directly.

Mr. Love: — Can you tell me which stakeholders in the arts world you met to discuss the Bouncing Back from COVID initiative?

Ms. Caswell: — We're working with Creative Sask, with SaskCulture, and with SK Arts on that one. And they represent the majority of the arts and culture individuals and groups across the province.

Mr. Love: — But none of those actual organizations, like the ones that fall under those umbrellas of creative, SK Arts and so on, like none of those organizations underneath those umbrellas were consulted? Just the larger provincial bodies?

Ms. Caswell: — Yes, mostly through our third parties that we work with. They bring forward those ideas from the industry. But yes, for Bouncing Back it would have been done through those groups as well, not necessarily directly with us, although we do have conversations with groups as well.

Mr. Love: — So Bouncing Back is the marketing campaign that was announced as part of this budget? Because the arts organizations that I . . . They heard it the first time . . . I mean I

haven't talked to everybody, right, but the first that they heard about it was on budget day. But you're saying that they were consulted ahead of time?

Ms. Caswell: — So we worked directly with the third parties, the ones that I mentioned — SaskCulture, Creative Sask, and SK Arts. They worked directly with the industry themselves. But they would have been consulted on ways to find solutions to the COVID and the pandemic impacts if they had. And they brought forward that idea of the marketing campaign that we then helped them flush out and are moving forward with. So there would have been some discussions with them, although I don't know exactly which individual groups they would have spoke to.

Mr. Love: — Okay, I kind of have this on my plan for later in the evening, but I'm going to ask since we're on it. So the Bouncing Back is the marketing campaign. And just help me make sure that I'm correct in this: that's a \$45,000 commitment from the provincial government?

Ms. Caswell: — Yes, and then there's commitments from our partners as well.

Mr. Love: — And from those, from Creative Sask. And so what's the total amount that is reflected in these estimates, and where is it reflected in these estimates? What line would it be under?

Ms. Caswell: — The 45,000 would come from our sport, culture, and rec budget, which is . . . I don't have the subvote in front of me exactly.

Mr. Love: — I've got it here. So that's community . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Subvote (18).

Ms. Caswell: — It comes from subvote (18) from their operating within that branch. And then the individual partners would have their own ways of budgeting for this.

Mr. Love: — So that's, sorry, subvote (18) under . . .

Ms. Caswell: — (18) and (19).

Mr. Love: — And (19). Oh, that makes more sense. So under community sport, culture and recreation programs. And so is that all or just the \$45,000 is from there? Not the other amount from the partner organizations?

Ms. Caswell: — Yeah, a total for the campaign is \$90,000, but the rest of it comes from our partners.

Mr. Love: — So I guess one follow-up question is, this is a new marketing program but there's no increase in those funds year over year. So what we'll be seeing . . . Where will the reduction be made to make room for this? You know, like this is a new initiative but the budget line hasn't changed from last year to this year.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Okay, the goal of this campaign is to re-engage audiences and participants and cultural consumers to support Saskatchewan cultural activities. So what it is, is we're encouraging people to kind of, you know . . . Like a lot of people

became very comfortable staying at home. So this campaign, it's to address the situation today. I don't mean like in today, Monday, but rather today as in to encourage people to step out of their comfort zone, to go to events, to participate, and to really enjoy what this province has to offer.

And so how do we do that? We're going to be putting forward this campaign to engage people, to encourage people. And sometimes people say, well I didn't even know there was something happening, you know. So it's going to start the conversation.

And now the campaign is in early stages of development, and SaskCulture has selected a Saskatchewan-based agency, ad agency, to assist with marketing the campaign. And kickoff meeting was held last month, so it's in the works. And this is going to be an exciting time.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, and I want to ask questions about the program. And I know members of the committee like when we stick to the estimates, right, so I'm just asking about the estimates. That's the rule — I know, I know — and I'm trying to do it. I'm trying to do it here.

So there's no change in the budget line year over year, but we have \$90,000 for a marketing campaign that didn't exist last year. So I'm just wondering where that money will come from, if there's reductions in other areas to make space for this campaign.

Ms. MacDougall: — I like answering budget questions, so you can shoot.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — She's an accountant.

Ms. MacDougall: — Yes. Yeah, shoot away at them. It really does go back to the fact that we spoke about earlier regarding inflation prices as well. It's setting priorities and then juggling within your budget. So we have a certain amount allotted every year in our budget to support heritage and culture organizations or activities. And this is a priority we deemed important for '22-23, so that's where we pull the money from.

Mr. Love: — So this is money that could have gone directly to supporting organizations but has been requested to be used for marketing?

Ms. MacDougall: — There's never any money allocated directly to supporting organizations that we're using.

Mr. Love: — Okay, I'm just maybe a little confused over where it's coming from then, like because there's no increase in the funds year over year. But that's okay. I mean these are big budgets. This isn't a big amount of money, right, so I'm not going to get too hung up on that.

Back to Minister Ross, to your comments. Can you tell me which marketing firm the province has acquired the services of?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Brown Communications here in Regina.

Mr. Love: — And has the province partnered with them on previous marketing campaigns?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Oh, Brown is a long-standing communication company that has probably been in existence for, gosh, I'd say 30 years.

Mr. Love: — I'm not a Regina resident, so maybe a Saskatoon name I would have . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — No, but they've done across the whole province so . . .

Mr. Love: — Yeah.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — It's a very reputable and good company.

Mr. Love: — So of the \$90,000, how much of it do you anticipate will be paid? Like how does that break down in terms of amount paid to Brown for their services? How much will be used for ad placement itself?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — We don't have that.

Mr. Love: — Any kind of ballpark figure? What would normally be done for a buy of this size? Like an ad buy of \$90,000, any suggestion of how much might be used or even where we might see these ads? Is it a social media campaign? Print media? Online media? All of the above?

Ms. Caswell: — Yes.

Mr. Love: — What can Saskatchewan taxpayers expect for \$90,000?

Ms. Caswell: — Yes. We don't have the exact breakdown. We're still in the process of developing an actual campaign. So they've gone out and collected quotes from other agencies. They selected Brown, and that's kind of the stage that we're at. So we'll be sitting down, going through and developing the campaign itself. But yes, a strong piece for sure social media, and I suspect there will be other pieces, anything that will allow us to reach out across the province as much as possible and leverage the money.

Mr. Love: — Okay. So Minister, you talked about a focus of the ad campaign will be to kind of getting people out of their comfort zones. And I get that there's kind of like two conflicting things here, as your government is also encouraging everyone to make their own personal COVID risk assessment without any current information about current COVID levels in the community.

But this is an ad campaign to encourage people to go out and to, you know, get into seats and take in all of the great things that we have. So I guess my question is like what is the impact of COVID information? Where do you find the balance as a minister to oversee this impact of COVID information, or the lack thereof, with encouraging people to get out into, you know, indoor destinations where there are no public health measures to keep them safe?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well it still comes down to personal choice. And we're just providing information for them that if they choose to, we're encouraging them to. But if you're asking in regards to COVID and COVID information and COVID numbers, that would be directed to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, a marketing campaign that's encouraging people to go into public spaces without any information to make a COVID risk assessment, it comes underneath your umbrella as Minister for Parks, Culture and Sport as this is your marketing campaign. And I guess that I'm asking this on a day when we know that there's, you know, waste water spikes of 742 per cent in Saskatoon. Now I know that this marketing campaign isn't rolling out today. But I guess just within your ministry, where do you find the balance of asking people to make an informed choice while encouraging them to go out to support businesses that have been through two really tough years?

Ms. MacDougall: — I'll tackle that question for you. I believe it would be similar to what we did when we opened parks last year, well actually two years ago, when COVID first started. We did some very careful consideration about safety as we opened.

[19:30]

And we'll do . . . not us directly will do the same thing, but our expectation is that those industry players in the sector will be cautious and make sure places are safe. You know, Conexus Arts Centre, for example, is one that follows whatever the entertainer wants to adhere to, right? So I think that the sector itself will also monitor and manage that.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, I do appreciate that. We had the Globe Theatre here, their executive director visiting the legislature last week, and we know that they're still implementing public health measures like masking and proof of vaccination. You know, again it's the province's wishes to do that because that's what their patrons have asked for. But I guess that there's just a little bit of a dilemma here with pushing people out of their comfort zone.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — We're not pushing people out of their comfort zone. We're encouraging them to maybe not be sitting in their basement, but in fact go out and interact and enjoy themselves and enjoy the wonderful cultural and musical aspects that we have to offer here in this province, but to do it in a safe manner. But you know what? It still comes down to personal choice. And we know that each one of those venues is going to also look at how to do things in a responsible manner.

Mr. Love: — And will the government or your ministry be providing any supports for them to do that in a safe way?

Ms. MacDougall: — I guess the answer is no. Our ministry will not have resources to put out there.

Mr. Love: — Okay. Okay, coming back to some of the earlier questions about pre-budget consultations, so has the ministry done a labour market assessment to assess the impact of the PST on arts, entertainment, and sports?

Ms. MacDougall: — I think that question is best served with Finance. They have the resources and expertise in their ministry to do those assessments.

Mr. Love: — Okay, so you said that there was a pre-budget consultation between the Finance minister and your ministry, that you support this budget. So what assessment have you taken on, Minister, of those impacted by your ministry's decisions to stand

by your government's decision to add PST to arts, entertainment, and sports? How can you be certain that this won't have a massive negative effect?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well that's why we've brought forward the campaign to re-engage people to go out and participate. And so that's how we believe that in fact we will be able to work through . . . Because as you know, it's at the gate, right. Having people, like you said, you met with Globe, so people sitting in those seats. And we have to encourage people to be able to do that. And so price of the ticket, we want people to feel comfortable and, you know, go out and enjoy what this province has to offer.

Mr. Love: — Has your ministry made an assessment of how much PST revenue will be generated through arts, entertainment, and sport?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — That would be under the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Love: — I know that they talked about a number in the area of \$20 million, which was initially slotted to pay for surgeries, which we know that that wasn't the case as those were federal dollars.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Pardon me? I'm sorry?

Mr. Love: — I'm saying that the Minister of Finance initially talked about roughly \$20 million that . . . The explanation was that that would be paying for surgeries due to the, you know, nearly 40,000 people waiting for surgeries in the province. But we know that that isn't needed for surgeries because there's over \$60 million in federal funds to pay for that.

So there's a number of people in the sector — arts, culture, entertainment, and sport — wondering why this PST has been applied at this time after two really, really challenging years of getting people into seats. And I think that there's, I think it's fair to say, some significant apprehension that a marketing campaign isn't going to have as big of an impact as jacking up the price and hoping that people will still come out.

So I wanted to ask the minister if you've met with any of the organizations that have very publicly denounced this increase or this implementation of PST, including the Saskatchewan Roughriders, Regina Folk Fest, Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, the Regina Globe Theatre, the Art Gallery of Regina, TC Place, or REAL [Regina Exhibition Association Ltd.] district. Have you met with any of them following? And what message do you have for their concerns over the introduction of PST on their business?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well I did meet with them. In fact I think you hosted quite a few of those organizations in the House last week. And I extended the offer to sit down and meet with them. So I invited them into my office here in the building. We sat down and we had very good discussions. They explained their concerns and we sat and listened.

So thank you very much for inviting them, because it was a really good opportunity. The day before they had come to the House, I had met quite a few of them online and we had a very good discussion on the industry and what's happening in the industry,

any concerns, any hesitations. And throughout the year we have met with stakeholders across the province, virtually of course, but have really spent a lot of time talking to different organizations to, you know, see where we could help out.

And that's where we came up with this marketing campaign, because it was in discussions with SaskCulture, SK Arts, and Creative Saskatchewan that it came forward that in fact this would really help out with the sales and tickets at the gate.

Mr. Love: — So just to be sure here, do you feel like all of their concerns are being alleviated by this marketing campaign to get people back into their organization, back into their seats?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I'm not sure every concern is going to be alleviated, as you said, but I think that this is going to have a really good, positive impact to these organizations to see the people who love music, the people who love dance, who love theatre, will be able to come out and enjoy what Saskatchewan has to offer.

Mr. Love: — I'd like to read a quote and ask for your response to this, Minister. Tim Reid, President and CEO of Regina Exhibition Associated Ltd. said, "The last two years have been the darkest time the industry has ever faced. As the province's largest sport and entertainment district, this change [speaking of the PST] will impact our business operations and entertainment goers."

What response would you have to Tim Reid as to why this is the right time to introduce PST, a time that he described as the darkest time the industry has ever faced?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well thank you very much. I haven't met with Tim since budget, but I have had numerous meetings such as . . . and all of the Regina MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] have had the opportunity to meet with Tim Reid and the people at REAL talking about their concerns, talking about their challenges, but also talking about some of their real good programs that they've brought forward and they would consider successes. But also, and I think you mentioned the Roughriders, the Minister of Finance has sat down and met with those two organizations, so I would imagine in fact that would be a really good . . . You know, those were the discussions that were had with both the Minister of Finance and those two organizations.

Mr. Love: — I guess again the question is about the timing. After two difficult years, why is now, without any consultation, without any on-ramping, you know, as other provinces harmonize their taxes . . . which is essentially what this is, harmonizing of the GST [goods and services tax]. They provided a period of adjustment and supports for businesses. Why is now the time, without any consultation or any support from the Government of Saskatchewan, to impose PST? Again, a time that Tim Reid says is the darkest time the industry has ever faced.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well I'm not sure if you realize, but that doesn't come into effect until October, so there is some time in that.

Mr. Love: — I do realize.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — But both those organizations have

benefited very well from the supports during COVID from the Ministry of Trade and Export. So you know, we have been there for them. We have helped them out. And like I said, we value both the Roughriders and REAL. Absolutely we do. And they provide a great service to entertainment facilities, to the province, especially to the city of Regina. But like I said, I know they have met and talked to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Love: — I'd like to read a quote from the Saskatchewan Roughriders, I'm sure a similar message as Tim Reid:

As a not-for-profit sports team and despite rising inflation costs, we worked tirelessly to minimize the financial impact on our fans. Unfortunately, we know today's decision will impact many in our community who are looking forward to coming together [on] Rider game day and for the 2022 Grey Cup.

You know, you say that the Finance minister met, but as a sports organization this also falls within your ministry. What would you say to the Saskatchewan Roughriders as why is this is the right time, a year when we're hosting the Grey Cup, to impose a tax on the Roughriders and everyone who will purchase a ticket to enter that stadium?

Mr. McLeod: — Mr. Chairman, I interject. I appreciate that Mr. Love has questions that he's trying to get at with respect to PST, but the minister has already pointed out that the PST questions are better directed to Finance. We're considering estimates for Parks, Culture and Sport. The PST question is misplaced in this consideration of estimates, and I would just put it to the Chair that perhaps this question is better aligned in a different estimates.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. McLeod. I'll just remind the member that all the questions in terms of estimates are in relation to Parks, Culture and Sport, and formulate your questions there.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. And just to be clear, the question that I'm getting at is about what calculations this ministry has engaged in calculating in terms of the economic impact of these tax increases on those underneath the umbrella of Parks, Culture and Sport.

So if you won't, if you don't want to respond to the quote from the Roughriders, I can move on to my next question, which is absolutely about how these organizations within the umbrella of this ministry will be affected. So I guess the choice is up to our minister and the officials. Would you like to respond to the quote from the Roughriders, or would you like me to continue?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well, we have financially — when you talked about the Roughriders and with the Grey Cup year — we have financially supported them. I think the number would be 5.5 million to the Roughriders, came through tourism to help out with the Grey Cup. So it's not that they have not had some financial support and backing from the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Love: — I don't think that I said that they haven't had any financial backing from the Government of Saskatchewan, but just what the impact of imposing PST on, you know, a not-for-profit sports team that, maybe we can all agree, generates a great

deal of pride and identity for people of Saskatchewan.

Here's my question, Minister. Has your ministry considered, you know . . . And we'll talk about Creative Saskatchewan later. But you've done an analysis of the economic impact, the economic . . . money that will be generated by that investment of \$8 million additional and estimate that there'll be \$50 million of economic development in the province. Okay, we'll get to that in a minute.

[19:45]

What about the economic impact of those organizations in arts, culture, entertainment, and sports? What will be the negative economic impact of imposing PST on all of those organizations?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I'm sorry. We've already answered that question. We've gone around this quite a bit in that you've asked this question numerous times coming from different angles and we've stated that in fact that question would be best put to the Minister of Finance. We're more than happy to answer your questions in regards to Parks, Culture and Sport and the estimates and the financial estimates that we're dealing with today.

But you're using up a lot of your time. And I cut short my time to talk about the wonderful things we're doing in Parks, Culture and Sport and you've asked that question how many times? And we'll give you the same answer: deal with Finance. The Minister of Finance would be more than happy to answer that question.

Mr. Love: — Mr. Chair, I'll put on the record that I don't appreciate the tone with which the minister is speaking to me. I am bringing forth concerns from stakeholders in this province who are furious with your government about imposing these taxes. The economic impact of people who won't be travelling to Regina, investing in restaurants, staying in hotels, to take in a show or a Riders game or maybe coming to Saskatoon to take in a Rattlers game or a show at Persephone, have economic impacts and they're decisions that are within your ministry.

So if you want to make an attempt to scare me away from asking questions, representing the stakeholders within this ministry, I don't think that that's becoming of a government elected official, and I think that it's very reasonable to ask these questions in an estimates committee.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — We have answered the question numerous times. I'm sorry if I seemed a little terse and I do apologize, but I felt that you were in fact maybe badgering and harassing me, so I was maybe feeling a little defensive. So I do apologize because that isn't very parliamentary of me.

So I'm more than prepared to sit here and deal with the estimates of Parks, Culture and Sport in a very reasonable manner and provide the best answers we can to you.

Mr. Love: — I am going to move on, and I have some questions about Creative Saskatchewan. And I heard your brief opening comments, and I do have some questions about the 8 million in additional funds bringing that investment up to \$10 million.

First of all, I think this is great news. And as I stated in the Assembly during my budget response, I hope, and I think all of my colleagues in opposition hope, that this achieves every goal

that this ministry and this government has set out. If we see this money lead to \$50 million in economic output, that would be awesome because we know that there was a massive financial outfall of losing the film employment tax credit, you know, roughly a decade ago. So this is a good thing.

I'm wondering . . . First question. And some of these questions may be just to ensure that my understanding is accurate. And so I may ask you to repeat some things that were already said or that have been said in other press releases and so on.

The first question I have is, can you provide a breakdown of the estimated \$50 million in economic output? Is this generated through . . . Yeah, like how will this be . . . This is again hotel night stays, investment in food and beverage from crews that will be working in the province. Can you help me to just break down that \$50 million a little bit? How will this money be generated through this new program?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well the study was undertaken by Meyers Norris Penny, or MNP. I've known them as Meyers Norris Penny for a lot of years. Anyway, so what SMPIA did was engage with them to do a scan and do the study on what is the impact today and in the changing environment of how people and what people are viewing today. It has changed. The industry has changed so much, as I stated before. So this was a study that was undertaken by SMPIA to then work together with Creative Saskatchewan for us to be able to then make this kind of decision. So it was the work undertaken by SMPIA.

Mr. Love: — And is that work or is the study done by MNP, is that publicly available?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — We can find out if it's public, but it was their study, right? It was SMPIA's study. They have ownership of it because they are the ones who contracted with them, and then they presented the information to us. So it wasn't something that we went and said to SMPIA, go out and hire Meyers Norris Penny and then come back and talk to us. It was an initiative that Meyers Norris Penny . . . and that was hired by SMPIA. And then SMPIA came and presented us with the information and how the impact of the industry, the changing industry, what it has today.

Mr. Love: — And I guess one of the very reasonable questions to ask there is, how much of that \$50 million in economic output does this government estimate was lost due to removing the previous program, the film employment tax credit?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — That wasn't part of the study. The study was based on today, the changing environment of today and how people have changed their viewing patterns today. And so it's based on real time and the industry and the choices that people are making today. Ten, twenty years ago we didn't have streaming platforms. Today in Canada you have access to over 20 streaming platforms, so you get to choose when and how you receive your entertainment.

And so then that's when SMPIA said, you know what? We have an opportunity here. And so they went out, did the study, and came back, presented to us. And after numerous stakeholder meetings back and forth, we were pleased to be able to provide them with the additional funding that will enhance this industry.

Mr. Love: — So I guess separately from this SMPIA-requested study . . . And we have had streaming platforms for a lot longer than 10 years. They're not brand new, and one of the critiques of this is that we may be a little late to the game, as far as to rebuild a film and television industry, because there's so much production happening in other places.

So has the government, to your knowledge, Minister Ross, done any calculation on the loss of income by eliminating the film tax credit over the last, you know, roughly 10 years.

The Chair: — Mr. Love, I'll ask you to bring it to 2022-23 and today's estimates, not revisit the past. Thank you.

Mr. Love: — I can just ask another question if that's . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I think the Chair ruled that the question you were asking was not related to the 2022-23 budget estimates.

The Chair: — Yes, please move on. Mr. Love, the floor is yours.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, so I am trying to gain an understanding about why this new program, which is very different than the old program, has the economic evidence that bringing it back now will lead to \$50 million, which the minister included in her opening remarks. So that's what I am inquiring about.

Can you provide, Minister . . . and again I have to ask about previous years for this, but this is more recent. So previously there was \$2 million in this grant. Has anything changed, other than the amount of money, from the feature film and television grant program through Creative Sask? Has anything else changed, or has it just been an increase of \$8 million to that program? Any criteria, or anything else in the process for applying?

Ms. Caswell: — Thank you. Yes, some things have changed, specifically over the last two years with COVID. As we all know, the world was effectively kept at home and what we all did was we picked up our phones and our television and our Netflix and our Disney+ and we watched a lot of online streaming pieces. And those organizations that run them have found that there is a lucrative market out there, and to continue to feed content back to the masses, all of us that are glued to our phones at every given moment of the day.

So as SMPIA did their work with MNP, they've identified upwards of \$50 million of shovel-ready products that could film in Saskatchewan. And that was some of the things that would make a difference right now.

The program itself is our grant. So the actual program has very few changes. Like there'll be some tweaks as we obviously adapt it to a larger fund. But really it is the fact that, yes, streaming has existed for many years, but it has not been used to the degree that it is now. And with, as you said, a lot of production happening, there's a lot of demand for sound stage space and demand for grants. And this is an opportunity for us to step in and take advantage of some of that and bring that money back into Saskatchewan.

Mr. Love: — So can you walk me through what is the criteria for a successful applicant? Saskatchewan residency? Like what

do they need? You know, just as much detail as you can share, you know, from memory. What does a successful applicant to this program possess?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well we've got only Saskatchewan labour, goods, and services are eligible for support under Creative Saskatchewan production grant which ensures the funds stay in the province.

Mr. Love: — And how much of the labour, goods, and services are eligible to be covered by . . . Is it a grant? Like just kind of give me any information you can. Would this grant cover 100 per cent up to a limit? Or 20 per cent up to a limit?

Ms. Caswell: — So there's two streams. If it's a Saskatchewan-owned company, production company, they can access up to 30 per cent of Saskatchewan expenses in the areas of goods and services and labour, as the minister pointed out. If it is a co-share, so partially owned by other groups as well but has a Saskatchewan-owned component, they can access up to 25 per cent as it stands right now within the grant. Those are the grant eligibility guidelines that are on the Creative Sask website.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Because there is the residency component.

Ms. Caswell: — So it's tied to being a Saskatchewan-owned company as really the core of it. And it, like I said, 25 per cent or 30 per cent depending on the degree of ownership.

Mr. Love: — Does the labour need to be Saskatchewan residents?

Ms. Caswell: — Yeah, the labour has to be Saskatchewan residents and the goods and services have to be purchased in Saskatchewan. So the nice thing with this program is it also expands out to a number of sectors beyond just the film and television sector. It's the Home Hardware store in small-town Saskatchewan where they're filming. It's clothing. It's restaurants. It's hospitality. It's hotels. It's transportation. It's truck rentals. It's equipment rentals. And then there's also the post-production work that can happen in the province as well.

Mr. Love: — And is there a cap on the size of an individual grant?

Ms. Caswell: — Right now Creative Sask has a cap on their grants for \$600,000.

Mr. Love: — How many of those \$600,000 grants would have been given out in previous budget years? Because that to me seems like the size of a production that you're trying to attract. I mean, and I'm going back to the minister's comments following the budget and looking to have like a feature film, you know, and a television series, not a small production, not one episode or a small corporate videography project but a bigger project. So in previous years, any sense of how many of those \$600,000 grants would have been given out in the last few years leading up to this change?

[20:00]

Ms. Caswell: — So it'll vary on the size of the production. And sorry, cap is probably not the right word. It's a limit that they can

come forward if there is something larger. But we've had productions like *Donkeyhead*, and we've had a number of smaller, locally produced series that happen as well. I don't have the exact grant numbers for each of those, but Creative Sask does list the groups that they work with as well.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — And I'm going to encourage you to go see *Donkeyhead*. It's a heck of a good movie.

Mr. Love: — Okay. Do you track or do you have any sense of how many, you know, production companies or contractors are working in film and television in Saskatchewan right now and any sense of how that has changed over the years?

And just to be clear, I guess the question I'm coming at is, one of the concerns that I've heard — and I'm sure you've heard this too, Minister — is that a lot of the people working in this industry left our province and they're currently working in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, or beyond.

And so with the residency requirement here, I guess I'm curious. Have you tracked . . . Do we still have that thread? It sounds like the SMPIA study maybe gets at some of this. But do we have that kind of critical mass of infrastructure left in the province to really see this boom in the economic output of \$50 million take place?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — We don't have those numbers. But I know I have met with SMPIA, and we've talked about some of the challenges absolutely. And we've also . . . I have spent time with Creative Saskatchewan talking about the industry and what do we need. And we're prepared to roll up our sleeves and make this come together.

Mr. Love: — So does one of those companies, a production company or a contractor or maybe just somebody who works in the industry who moved for employment to another part of Canada and . . . I just want to maybe paint a bit of a scenario here, right. So maybe this individual works in costume design or set design, and they've been working in Vancouver or Toronto gaining tons of skills. So the way that the sector works now, somebody who maybe stayed in Saskatchewan wouldn't have had a chance to build those skills over the last decade because our level of production here just isn't the same as what it used to be or what it is in larger centres.

So now they've moved to another city. They've been involved in the sector. And now we've got this increased funding for this program to hopefully rebuild the industry here in Saskatchewan. What do they need to do to be eligible to work on a set in Saskatchewan so that their labour is covered by this grant? Do they need to move back to Saskatchewan first to salvage residency here? Or what's kind of the hope for all those folks who work in the industry but they're Saskatchewan people working in other cities?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well we believe that the crews will want to come here. We've had contact from other people saying, we're pretty excited about this announcement. We want to come home. And you know, we've had really good support from the industry. I mean I could sit here and read you pages and pages of fabulous quotes from people who were really excited about the injection of 8 million to bring it up to 10 million for the industry, and they felt that this is really . . . the time is right. And that's what I'm

going to say. The time is right. The industry has changed. We know that people really do want to move back home. So we're expecting a pretty exciting season, and the grants will be . . . well it opens up this spring, and so we know that it'll be taken up.

Mr. Love: — Do you have any quotes that you can share with us of somebody who would like to move back?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I don't have the move back, but I have the people saying:

Sitting high above the speakers in the Legislative Building listening to the announcement of the increase to Creative Saskatchewan seems very surreal to me. Almost like I hadn't quite heard right. Then the realization of it all sunk in when they announced the renaming of the soundstage the John Hopkins Regina Sound Stage. Tears came to my eyes and it took everything in me to remain properly still (as is the requirement of the assembly) and refrain from clapping or shouting. This is a step in the right direction. I'm very excited about the future of the film industry in our Province. We can only go up from here.

And that is from number 10, oh, Anthony — oh, how do I say his name? — Towstego, and he's the president of Thomega Entertainment, proud SMPA board member. So there we go. And that's just one of so many of the industry that was so pleased with the support that we are providing them.

And like I said, we expect to see this go across the whole province, not just settled here in the city of Regina. But we expect to see the industry filming throughout the whole province. So the whole province will benefit. Everyone will see something good happen here. This was the right thing to do.

Mr. Love: — Yeah and again, I said right off the top, I hope it achieves . . . Like, I think that we've heard from every member, you know, on my side who spoke in their budget response. Like, this is a good thing. We're excited too. We hope it succeeds.

I was just asking about the concerns that have come my way as critic to make sure that they've been, like, thought through to ensure that the program succeeds.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well SMPA has worked very closely with Creative Saskatchewan. And the whole industry is working together to make this a success.

Mr. Love: — So again the question was — and I don't think I got an answer to this — for a company or an individual or a labourer to be eligible, they would have to have Saskatchewan residency before applying for the grant? Or could they apply for the grant and, if successful, if they got the funding for the production, then move back, establish residency, to create the production?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — The commitment today is, as we said, Saskatchewan labour, goods, and services are eligible for this financial support.

Mr. Love: — And is that before they apply for the grant? So they would have to move back? I mean, somebody who had moved away — I know that's not the whole industry; I know there's lots

of people here — but would they have to move back before the application is received?

Ms. Caswell: — So they would have to partner with a Saskatchewan-based company. So if they're moving back, the company itself would have Saskatchewan labour and goods and services. So it might not cover every dollar that comes in if they're moving back. But if they're coming back it has to be partnered with a Saskatchewan company to be eligible for the Creative Sask grant.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, and I guess as I'm hearing my own words I'm kind of asking, will the companies or who are applying for the grant because their labourers, of course, if they, you know . . . That's on them to make sure that they're hiring Saskatchewan labour.

Will there be any checks and balances? Like I mean, how will you monitor this as a ministry to ensure that the labour are people who, you know, who are full-time Saskatchewan residents? Is it through a Saskatchewan driver's licence, like, SGI? How will that be enforced?

Ms. Caswell: — Creative Sask has a number of rules in place. So the grant itself, they go through those exact decision-making processes already with the smaller grant. So they're used to going through and doing their due diligence to make sure that it's only being applied towards Saskatchewan-based labour, goods, and services. And they have groups that go through their applications to make sure that they are meeting all of the eligibility requirements. So it will continue through that. And then we have oversight of Creative Saskatchewan through our ministry and work with them to make sure that they're reporting and doing the steps that they indicated.

Mr. Love: — Okay, so maybe just one last question about Creative Sask. For the money to stay in Saskatchewan, the labour, goods, and services are all from here, and I think that that's great. And I won't get into — I didn't want to ask — but I won't get into how it differs from the previous program where you said some of the money was leaving. So this is, I think, a good promise or indication that the money will stay here.

I've kind of lost my question here. I'll see if it comes back. I may interject later and ask about it . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Take my time. I'll just pause; no one say a word. I'll come back to that question.

I have one more question about the Creative Sask funding. Here it is. Is this commitment, has there been any commitment from the government that this will be more than a one-year increase? And again the scenario is for somebody who's been working in the industry, gaining experience, and this is . . . I actually talked to somebody who works on film sets and she talked about how much she's grown as a professional working in the industry outside Saskatchewan since the film tax credit ended. It was a crushing blow for her. It took her a few years, but eventually she picked up and moved and now works in a couple different provinces. But still calls Saskatchewan home.

And one of the concerns that I gathered out of that conversation is, will all those professionals working in the industry in other parts of Canada take it seriously right away to move back, set up

shop, start a new production company here to start pumping out Hallmark films? Or will it take time? Will they want to see that we're serious about, you know, that this industry took 20 to 25 years to build up to where it was in 2012 and so people might be a little bit slow to come back.

So is there any commitment from the government that this is more than a one-year blip, that it will be annualized or even increased in the future to ensure that we're getting that \$50 million economic output out of it each and every year?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well we have \$10 million set aside for this year. We're going to encourage production companies to get their project put forward because the taking up of the \$10 million will be a really good signal that this is successful. And that's what we need to hear. We need to know that this program, the money that we put in based on the information and the request from the industry, will be well used. And so we know and we're expecting it to be all utilized, and I think that it will speak for itself. The success of the money and the industry will speak for itself.

Mr. Love: — So again is there a commitment beyond this budget year to keep those funds or to increase them? Like if it's utilized, will it be here the following year?

Ms. MacDougall: — I guess the answer to that is, every year we review our budget and set our priorities. I think what Minister Ross was getting at is that, you know, the success of it this year certainly lends itself, you know, as an increased priority or not, right. So it's part of the budget-setting process.

Mr. Love: — And if it's underutilized, would that potentially lead to these funds being reduced in the future?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — We don't foresee it being underutilized. When we met with SMPA and Creative Saskatchewan, they indicated to us that in fact there's enough projects ready to go or close to being ready to go that the money will be utilized. So we don't think that we've got a whole bunch of money sitting there and nobody's going to use it. Absolutely not. We think that this is going to be a really busy year for the industry in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Love: — And will your ministry be tracking to see if you've reached that goal of \$50 million in economic output resulting from this grant? Or who will be following that to see if that, you know, additional benefit, on top of great movies and TV, that there will be also economic development in the province?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Creative Sask monitors very closely and works very closely with the industry, and they would be the ones that will be having all of that information brought together for them.

Mr. Love: — Okay. I'm going to move on from Creative Sask and move on to Saskatchewan Arts. And I'm curious, when was the last . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Just one second. We have someone from Parks moving forward here.

Mr. Love: — Sorry, SK Arts, not Parks. That is . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — You said parks, right?

Mr. Love: — I said arts. Arts.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Oh, arts.

Mr. Love: — Like SK Arts.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I thought you said parks.

Mr. Love: — No, that's okay.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I'm sorry, Jennifer.

Ms. Johnson: — All good.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — No parks for you.

Mr. Love: — No, you can stay. You can maybe take a run at this one.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I'm sorry. Just hard to understand you with your mask on.

Mr. Love: — I know.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — So we were ready to go for Parks.

Mr. Love: — We'll get there, I promise.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Please do, because we love our parks.

[20:15]

Mr. Love: — I do too. In terms of SK Arts grants, when was the last time that the Government of Saskatchewan increased that budget line? And was there any consideration in this year, given the difficult two years for artists, that this would be the appropriate year to increase that?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — So for the last number of years, what we've done is maintain stable funding for the arts. And then this year, like I said, we had focused in on Creative Saskatchewan, but we have maintained, like I said, stable funding for the arts community.

Mr. Love: — So last year I read a quote in this committee that I think is still relevant, and it comes from the Regina Symphony Orchestra. I'll quote this directly:

Our industry creates thousands of quality careers. SK Arts hasn't seen a budget increase in over a decade, but costs have risen.

The situation is dire and full recovery will take years. It is time for material emergency assistance and permanent funding increases. It's time for appreciation and clarity regarding our industry's significant financial and employment impact, and certainly time for recognition of the vital role the arts play in the well-being of our communities.

So last year when I read the quote, Minister, you expressed appreciation for the arts and the challenges that they've faced throughout the pandemic. I think it's, dare I say, without robust

support to get through these challenging times. But here we are again this year without any increases and these budget estimates to increase. So you said you've maintained the status quo, but your own ministry had said that you account for rising inflationary costs.

So those rising inflationary costs, they impact the ministry. They impact parks. They impact arts organizations. They impact capital projects that we discussed off the top. They impact everything, but yet we've had 10 years of flatlined funding.

So what message would you give to arts organizations who rely on those grants, that the same funding that was available 10 years ago is still sufficient today?

Ms. MacDougall: — Okay, I've got a little bit of an answer for you. I would say that this government has actually increased the budget by over \$600,000 since they've been here, compared to . . . prior to '08-09.

Mr. Love: — And when was that increase made?

Ms. MacDougall: — Well it was made a couple of years . . . The last increase is — you're probably about right — in '14-15 was the last increase.

Mr. Love: — And did you make any considerations in this year's budget, with your consultation with the Finance minister, to increase SK Arts grants to catch up with the last eight years of status quo funding?

Ms. MacDougall: — So each year we do make considerations for budgets for our stakeholders for our entire budget. As well, we also engage with these stakeholders each year. They do submit a budget proposal that we analyze and look at, and then set our priorities accordingly.

Mr. Love: — Would you agree with the statement that a SK Arts grant of equal funding 10 years ago doesn't go as far today in today's financial climate?

Ms. MacDougall: — I would agree with that statement. But I would also suggest that there's many other organizations and agencies within the Government of Saskatchewan that probably are under the same constraints, our ministry included.

Mr. Love: — Okay. Beyond the marketing program that we talked about at length, are there any additional supports for arts organizations to help them get to a time when they're seeing full capacity in theatres and shows and music venues? Beyond a marketing campaign, is there any other support out there at this time?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Today they do have the opportunity to have full capacity. And they all have their own marketing campaigns, as you know. But as for additional programming or things like that, no. Like I said, we have the Bouncing Back from COVID campaign. That will cover off the arts.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, so I guess that there's kind of two things that keep crowds away from being in seats. Like one is health mandates. A 50-per-cent-capacity limit . . .

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — It's not . . . It's full capacity right now.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, I understand. This is the part of my question. There's two things that during the pandemic have kept crowds away from gathering. One is public health mandates, and the other is a transmissible virus.

So while we're still seeing arts organizations that even without any public health measures, they're still not really seeing — just like gyms or fitness areas — they're still . . . I mean, there's no mandates. There's no health requirements anywhere in the province, but they're still not seeing people return. You know, they're still dealing with much, much lower capacity than what they would have seen in 2019. So I guess then my question remains, are there any supports for these organizations, who are still struggling with getting people back, beyond the marketing campaign?

Ms. Caswell: — So the arts sector and the creative sectors and the groups that we work with have had access to a number of support programs throughout the COVID pandemic. We've had the tourism sector support program that provided 14.7 million to over 761 applicants and another 14.3 million in a phase 2 that had another 824 applicants. They've been able to access some of them through the Saskatchewan small business emergency payment and the strong recovery adaptation rebate.

So there's been some programs along the way for these groups to keep accessing some funds to help them through this difficult time. But really, you know, it's turning forward and looking at that campaign to try and get people to attend, because that is where they earn their money, and also through Creative Sask and the funding there, knowing that that has the ability to move out just beyond the film and television into the arts sector as well and provide economic supports for them that way through increased business.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, can you maybe just share a little bit more about how you would envision the Creative Sask increased funding to have an impact on other artistic disciplines that don't typically work in film and television? Like how do you hope to bring them into that, into rebuilding that industry here?

Ms. Caswell: — Yeah, so many of them actually would, and maybe not directly in the view of they're not a producer per se, but all of those productions require artists to do the sets. They require, as you indicated before, individuals who do music or costumes, and a lot of that comes through the arts groups as well. It's also the opportunity for them to work with various groups on scripts and writing. So there's a number of ways that those groups will work in the film and television production area as well.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — And IT. And we have IT also.

Ms. Caswell: — Yeah, and also the IT and the digital sectors are other ones. Graphic design is a huge piece within the arts and is absolutely a transferrable skill into the film and television areas.

Mr. Love: — Okay, thanks for that. I guess maybe just, if the minister could offer a comment, you know, that we have seen arts organizations like the Regina Symphony Orchestra advocating for increased grants, a line in the budget that's been flatlined since 2014. And while they haven't received that support, due to

the virus — due to COVID, not due to health measures — they don't have, you know, the crowds coming back the way that they'd hoped. So they've got a couple knocks against them, and then they've got the PST.

What hope would you offer to our arts organizations that this government recognizes that in 2019 they contributed a billion dollars to our GDP [gross domestic product], and they're now one of the hardest hit sectors in the province with, you know, additional barriers to getting folks back into seats? What hope would you offer to the organizations, you know, who didn't see an increase in their grants this year?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — You know, I'm coming back to the Bouncing Back from COVID campaign. They would be able to benefit directly from that campaign to encourage people to go out and participate. So when you say, what hope do they have, like I said, they have the ability to really kind of benefit from that program and that advertising campaign that will encourage people to . . . And you know, different sectors are probably going to be highlighted within the campaign.

I'm not going to write the campaign for Brown. I think they're pretty smart people. They know how to write their own, along with the information from our creative sector. But they will benefit directly from people being encouraged to come out and enjoy what our industry has to offer.

Mr. Love: — It sounds like there's a lot riding on this marketing campaign.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — That's why we put it in place.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, \$45,000 in a billion-dollar industry is riding on . . . A billion dollars in 2019 contributed to our provincial GDP is riding on a \$45,000 marketing campaign. And I know I asked about this earlier, but can you give any kind of timeline on when the campaign might be ready to roll? I know that you don't know the details of whether it'll be, you know, digital, social, print, what it might look like. Any idea when we can expect to see this program rolling out, and when we get to see the benefits of it?

Ms. Caswell: — We'll be working with them over the next month or two to put the campaign together. Our goal is to look at something being launched kind of leading into the summer, which is a great time, especially if people are continuing to be concerned with COVID. A lot of the outdoor events, that will give the opportunity for people to get used to going back to events again.

Mr. Love: — Great, thanks for that. Maybe just a couple of questions for the minister on physical activity in the province, so moving on to kind of like the sports side of things. What is the current provincial strategy for physical activity for children and youth? Where is that housed?

Ms. Caswell: — So we work with a number of organizations in the area of physical activity. It is a key area within our sport, culture and rec. A lot of our time is spent with the Community Initiatives Fund — that's the CIF — who has a mandate to help support work in that area, as well as the work that we do with Sask Sport, obviously, and Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation

Association.

So we work with those groups to leverage their networks across the province to ensure that physical activity continues to be a key piece of work within our province. As well, we work with ParticipACTION from the ministry to do some work in ensuring that Saskatchewan residents have access to the ParticipACTION app, which helps them track and encourages them to participate in physical activity.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — And we also have the 4 million.

Ms. Caswell: — Oh, and also we have the \$4 million that is for the active families benefit as well to encourage families to have their children enrolled in sports activities.

[20:30]

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Right. And we did the community rink. Do you want to do that one too, or should I? Okay. Do you want to talk about the community rink program? Yeah, because we did 1.7 million in the 2021-22 budget to the community rink affordability grant, and this program delivered through the Saskatchewan Parks and Rec Association that supports rinks and winter physical activities. So over 590 ice surfaces across the province have received funding.

Mr. Love: — So one of my questions is, in the past we had a program in Saskatchewan called In Motion that was kind of the — what's the right word? — kind of like the only program, the flagship program of Active Saskatchewan, which lost all of its funding through the Community Initiatives Fund, which you just mentioned.

My understanding is that In Motion was the provincial strategy for getting children and youth active in the province. It had been around for 18 years, significant data and evidence to prove its effectiveness in getting young people active, in particular, young people from underserved communities and populations. So what will be replacing In Motion as a provincial strategy for getting young people active in Saskatchewan? And where would that be reflected in the budget?

Because to my understanding, you mentioned ParticipACTION and Sask Sport. And that's not really what those . . . my understanding, that's not really what those organizations do. Well they advocate physical activity but having, like, a strategy housed within one office that receives government funding. Where would that be located now? Or is it located . . . Is that something that exists, a provincial strategy for physical activity for children and youth?

Ms. MacDougall: — I'll tackle this. There is a national strategy for physical education within Canada that we do adhere to. And we work very closely on that strategy with the Community Initiatives Fund. They were the primary funder of Active Saskatchewan previously, as well as some other non-governmental entities. And that funding stream now is just directed directly to those communities for any kind of participation projects that they may have in their communities.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, so I did have a chance to look at it. I mean it was a while ago, so I can't speak from memory too much at

some of the different organizations that Community Initiatives Fund funds. And I know that in the past when gaming revenues dropped due to the pandemic, the government backfilled some of that with general revenue to make sure that those community initiatives were still being funded, but not In Motion.

So I think there was \$4 million in the past, but none of that went to In Motion. And I guess to me this just, it leaves a bit of a gap in Saskatchewan of not having a provincial strategy that was . . . I mean this was urban, rural; this is province-wide. And so with the national strategy that we direct CIF funds to, good news. But where is the local, you know, the made-in-Saskatchewan plan for getting young people active?

Ms. MacDougall: — Well again, I think, the made-in-Saskatchewan plan is a combination of what Candace said earlier. Those three entities, or four, including Community Initiatives Fund, and then our ministry, we work and develop those physical action plans internally and allocate accordingly.

Mr. Love: — And are there any, like, government documents? Or is there any document that lays out what our strategy would be?

Ms. MacDougall: — Well we follow the national strategy very closely.

Mr. Love: — Okay. Okay, thanks for that. I'll maybe move on to asking some questions about Parks, P-a-r-k-s, Parks.

First question, I see in your budget documents that the business plan has a key action under goal one to invest \$9 million to maintain and renew park infrastructure and 3.5 to expand park infrastructure. Can you just update the committee? Was this goal met? And can you give a breakdown of how even just some of those dollars were used in terms of maintaining and renewing park infrastructure in Saskatchewan?

And maybe if I can tag on a question on that, I see that in this year there's a bit of a drop in park capital projects. It's down 5.5 million, and the question is, what accounts for that drop? Are there any projects that are stalled or put on hold for this year? Anything that was in the planning phase that won't be moving forward?

Ms. Johnson: — Sure. Hi, I'm Jennifer Johnson. I'm the assistant deputy minister responsible for provincial parks, parks division. I'll start with your last question there. There was enhanced stimulus funding for Parks capital projects over the past, well, last year and the year before. So that accounts for the drop, is the stimulus was completed, and there was a number of projects funded under that stimulus.

And a number of them you'll actually get to see this year. That'll be pretty exciting — four new day-use pavilions. We're seeing a different trend in visitation in provincial parks these days where there's larger groups gathering, larger families gathering, so we've got really cool big new day-use pavilions in some parks that are near urban centres.

We have a number of other projects as well. I could go through those if you want. We've got . . . The Buffalo Pound chalet building is being totally renovated. You mentioned you're not

from here so you don't maybe know that, but it was the chalet of the ski hill. So it's being completely renovated. It's become a bit of a hub for mountain biking, so people will be able to gather. Yeah, it's a great place. Lots of great trails there. So people will be able to gather in that renovated space.

We have a brand new campground opening at Cypress Hills Provincial Park, so Pine Hill campground. That was a campground that was actually closed a number of years ago so that it could regenerate. So all of the trees are really cute. They're my height now, and they're brand new. And so we've gone back in there, created about 60 campsites, and we have an opportunity for six fixed-roof accommodations as well, so a commercial SE [structural engineer] can go and develop some fixtures. So we'll have a really nice mix of brand new accommodation options at Cypress Hills.

Those are some of the projects under the stimulus funding, and that was, like I said, why the budget decreased this year. You're going to have to repeat, though, some of the other questions you had because you bundled three or four there and I missed . . .

Mr. Love: — Yeah, you're right. No, I had bundled a few together. And I am very . . . I don't know when my time will come, but I'm excited to get out to Buffalo Pound on the mountain bike trails. My son and I started . . . I used to mountain bike a lot, like years ago, and just got back into it last summer with my nine-year-old son around Saskatoon. And I saw a totally different side of my city. Like absolutely incredible. And there's amazing work being done there by the Saskatoon Trail Alliance and some other groups. And there's this great community that are taking care of the trails and volunteering their time. And it's, yeah, just totally different perspective on the city that I've lived in for a long time when you hit those trails. So yeah, I've seen pictures from Buffalo Pound. Can't wait to get there and I'll check out the new pavilion.

The other questions that I had were from the business plan. So looking back, like the plan to invest \$9 million to maintain and renew park infrastructure and 3.5 million to expand, was the goal met in the last budget year? I think the . . . [inaudible] . . . said that, with those . . . [inaudible] . . . Where were the four pavilions? Buffalo Pound . . .

Ms. Johnson: — The pavilions?

Mr. Love: — Yeah.

Ms. Johnson: — Pike Lake, Blackstrap, Buffalo Pound, Echo Valley.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Echo Valley was that shack that they redid.

Ms. Johnson: — But we've also added a pavilion. Brand new.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Yeah.

Ms. Johnson: — We always try to balance upgrades and renewal for park visitors. So it's a balance between upgrading existing park infrastructure and new park infrastructure. And so was our goal met? Yes, I'd say every year it is. And we have, you know, coming up this year, as you mentioned, about 12.5 million for capital improvements.

And some of those include new campground service centres at Duck Mountain and Sask Landing provincial parks; water system upgrades at Candle Lake, Sask Landing, and Meadow Lake provincial parks; waste water system upgrades at Meadow Lake and Echo Valley provincial parks; landscape and accessibility improvements at Regina Beach Rec Site and Buffalo Pound. We've got boat launch expansion and upgrades at Douglas. A shoreline stabilization project at Narrow Hills. Major road upgrades at Battlefords Provincial Park, which will be very much appreciated. And a number of other projects across the park system.

Mr. Love: — That's exciting. I mean Saskatchewan people love our parks, and that's great to hear. Can you let me know what the . . . Can you update the committee on the status of, if you have any updates on the progress of the urban national park in Saskatoon, work done with the MVA [Meewasin Valley Authority], and how is the province supporting that partnership as it moves forward?

Ms. Johnson: — Sure, I can update you on that. So I am sitting on the steering committee for that. It is still in what they consider pre-feasibility stage. So there is interest and it has been identified as a potential location. But really Meewasin is doing a lot of engagement with local stakeholders right now and really reviewing, you know, potential benefits, how this would look, what the operating model would even look like, what the governance would look like. They're just really examining all of the potential angles there.

So like I said, pre-feasibility. There's quite a long timeline before they determine how to move forward and the province is sitting on a steering committee there and we're being . . . Yeah, we're engaging as well on a regular basis.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, there's so much to think about with a project of that size. And I've had a couple of meetings with the folks at the Meewasin Valley Authority and it's really quite an exciting endeavour. And maybe it's too early to comment on this, and it's okay if it is, but what kind of supports do you envision the province putting behind the future success of that project?

Ms. Johnson: — I would agree with you. It's probably too early to say that. We do support Meewasin on an annual basis but in terms of, you know, if it turns into a national urban park we're just not sure what that will require or what we would consider in terms of additional supports.

Mr. Love: — And what about even just like the extra . . . obviously it's creating a lot of extra workload for MVA for their staff to do all this pre-feasibility work. Is all of that work being done at the MVA level right now? Is there any work being done with the ministry or at the federal level? And have they requested any supports to . . . I mean like it's a lot to think about there. You know, the consultations alone would be exhausting. Has there been any requests for support for either increased funding, human resources, anything from the government to help them out?

Ms. Johnson: — So Meewasin is working with Parks Canada. Parks Canada is leading in helping to support this project, and they also supported them hiring a consultant to help with some of the engagement.

Mr. Love: — Okay. Cool. I've got a question about . . . You know, I've got *Hansard* from last year here in front of me but I'm going to probably not waste your time for me to find it. Last year I asked a question about the American company — I think it's called Aspira — that's used to book provincial campsites. And going from memory, there was a discussion about what year of the contract we were in.

I'm just wondering if you can update the committee on, are we pleased with the services that we're receiving? I know that they're the largest provider of online campsite bookings in North America. You know, a couple of years into the contract, are we pleased with what's being provided? Has it made life and work easier for our park staff? What kind of feedback are you hearing from the front lines?

Ms. Johnson: — So yeah, as you mentioned, Aspira is a North American company, has employees in Canada and the US [United States]. And so far we have been pleased with them, absolutely.

[20:45]

We're hoping to launch and introduce a number of new features this year to our customers. So one is the ability to compare sites online, which they weren't able to do before. So they'll be able to see what site meets their needs better. There will be a favourites button right on the website, and this sounds so simple but it didn't exist before. And so before, our campers actually used to take photos of their favourite sites, save them in their camera roll, write it on a napkin, you know, tuck it in their pocket. So now we'll have that right online.

We have the ability, and have for this past year now, to sell e-gift cards, which have been quite popular and was actually a really popular Christmas gift too. So that was great both for our customers and also resulted in some revenue for us at Christmastime, which we didn't often get before.

There's a feature on the website that's called Camping this Weekend, which is really neat because you often hear that parks are full, that they book up right at launch and then people can't get into them. Well that's not true. You just have to be a little bit more flexible about where you want to travel to. So with this feature you can check out where there are still sites available on a weekend.

And we also have introduced park program and special event listings and the ability to pre-register for those, and that's all available through Aspira. So people can know that they're going to get a spot in their special event or program that they want to take part in. And so that's also been a good feature. So overall, yes, quite pleased. We've introduced a lot of enhancements.

And you know, the other thing I'd say is, last year through reservation launch they handled our reservation volumes really well, and that was a huge improvement from our previous provider. So we were quite pleased with that.

A Member: — So what was the number there?

Ms. Johnson: — 35,000.

Mr. Love: — 35,000 reservations through . . .

Ms. Johnson: — During the launch period last year.

Mr. Love: — And how long is the launch period?

Ms. Johnson: — You know, every year it's a little bit different. We spread it out over a number of days. I think last year it was 10 days.

Mr. Love: — So 35,000 in 10 days.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — They were busy.

Ms. Johnson: — Well and the bulk of those actually happened between 7 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. each day, and we launched different parks on each day. But like the bulk of the activity happens first thing in the morning.

Mr. Love: — Okay.

Ms. Johnson: — Yes, it's very exciting.

Mr. Love: — So this year, you're saying that they'll be able to hopefully . . . Maybe not every campsite, but they'll be able to see a picture of the site or like an aerial map? I'm just curious, like this is cool.

Ms. Johnson: — Yeah, you could see pictures of the sites before, so that's not new, but we have enhanced our maps as well. And so we're hoping that that will be ready for reservation launch. We're actually working quite diligently on that because one of the pieces of feedback we heard from our customers was they wanted to see improved maps, so we've been working on that for the whole year. We take customer feedback very seriously, and we try to make any improvements that they suggest as we can.

Mr. Love: — Cool. Now I recall from last year's discussion that the booking charge or the reservation fee is essentially a surcharge on the transaction. So I know that the provincial government, you don't take that in as revenue but you collect it, and all of that goes to the booking company. Is that a correct understanding?

Ms. Johnson: — Essentially. It's a fee-for-service and so we charge, as you mentioned, a surcharge, and that fee is how we pay for the service provider. Yeah.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, so the Government of Saskatchewan doesn't pay anything. It's a user fee for the service?

Ms. Johnson: — Correct, yeah. The reservation fee for online is \$12. If you use the call centre, it's \$14. The change fee is \$15, and yes, it's a fee-for-service.

Mr. Love: — And do you have any numbers to report as far as like how much you collected through transactions and paid to Aspira? I know that it's not really the government paying them, but you're collecting the money and sending it there.

Ms. Johnson: — No, so it's not reflected in the estimates, but it is reflected in Public Accounts volume 2, and SaskBuilds and Procurement actually holds the contract. So on page 190 of the

'20-21 Public Accounts, for example, you'll see a line item. It's called RA Outdoors Ltd. and that's ReserveAmerica. That's the name of Aspira. So it was \$996,845 that year. Obviously those amounts change annually depending on how many reservations are made.

Mr. Love: — Okay. And can you tell me, I mean like were those initial 10 days, like the launch period or whatever, like that's exciting. Can you tell me the total number of campsites booked and how that compares? Like I believe, and I missed it in your opening remarks, Minister, I think on park visits, but I know campsite visits are different. But what's been the overall trend?

I know that we've kind of . . . As more people have stayed home, you know, people aren't vacationing further away, we've seen more park visits. I know that the MVA, for example, is tracking huge increased engagement in our outdoor spaces.

So can you provide, you know, before we wrap up tonight, just any numbers on the increased campsite visits, park visits, you know, that really support the work that you do, the great work that you do? Because Saskatchewan people are, you know . . . I mean the pandemic's been terrible but it's been one of the good things is really enjoying our own province I think a lot more.

Ms. Johnson: — Absolutely. There was pent-up demand for travel, and we absolutely saw that reflected in our provincial parks. 2021 was a record year for visitation to provincial parks, and it beat previous records for both entry and for camping. So there was more than 1 million visits by parties to provincial parks in 2021, and that beat the record from 2020. And there was more than 400,000 camping nights, which beat the camping night records from 2016.

And we also added a bunch of winter activities to our parks over the last couple of years, and so we saw winter visitation that we've never seen before. We wanted to ensure that people, through the pandemic, had a safe space to go enjoy the province and a safe space to travel to, so we added things. I think you actually mentioned it last year, the Skate the Park at Echo Valley.

Mr. Love: — Yes.

Ms. Johnson: — So that's where we flood the campground roads and allow people to go there and go skating through the campground, which is a really unique experience. And we even light it up at night so people can go skating at night.

We built a snow maze at Duck Mountain. At Cypress Hills we built a luge track so people could slide down on a, I don't know, basically Frisbee on the luge track. We added guided winter programming this year because the pandemic restrictions had lifted so we were able to resume in-person programming.

And in the summer we added a bunch of enhancements too because we knew people were travelling mostly in-province. So we added movie nights. We added special events. And this summer we've added special theme days for the summer. So we're going to have programming that's kind of better and new and different than ever before. We're continuing to build on this increased visitation and hopefully encourage people to continue to come back.

Mr. Love: — That's awesome. Maybe my last couple questions here will be about regional parks. And I notice that in this year's budget we have flatlined funding in regional parks. I think it went up a couple years ago. But you know, I've received some advocacy, and I did write to the minister on this, that the regional park funding model has been described as like unsustainable, that the municipal funding model, that they're not able to meet the needs especially of like capital investment and bigger projects in some of our aging regional parks.

And so my question is, what's the response from the ministry to the advocacy from the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association to get some help from the provincial government that municipal governments simply are unable to provide right now?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well as you know, I've had opportunities to have stakeholder meetings with the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association, and we have a really strong relationship with them. The 2022-23 budget includes 600,000 in grant funding for our regional parks, and that's an increase of 77,000 since 2021. So annual funding has increased over the past 15 years from as low as 75,000 in 2007-2008, when we formed government, to today is 600,000. So it's a substantial increase from when we formed government to today.

Mr. Love: — So again just responding to the advocacy from the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association and their position that, again like larger capital projects, that that \$600,000 just simply won't meet the needs of . . . I think we have 96 regional parks in the province. You know, municipal governments who are unable to . . . I mean, they set their budgets before the province does. They're unable to run deficits. And some of these are kind of larger, one-time costs.

And I know that the regional parks association has advocated for an annualized increase, and I think it's — again I'm going from memory here — I think that they were looking for this budget line to increase to \$1 million a year to start to invest in some of this aging infrastructure, which if we don't, you know, like that infrastructure will eventually kind of like age out.

So would it be the position of the government that you continue to put that onto municipalities to fund? Or is this something that the government is considering to find ways within Parks, Culture and Sport to increase funding to regional parks?

Ms. Johnson: — So we do review budget requests annually and build the budget annually. Provincial grant funding, as you mention, for the regional parks does leverage additional investment in capital infrastructure improvement because it requires cost matching from other sources. So our provincial investment does result in cost-matching investments from other sources as well, which allows for more and larger capital projects.

I would just add too to what the minister was saying. You know, in 2008-09 there was a four-year commitment made to provide 2.4 million to regional parks over four years, and our ministry actually exceeded that commitment and provided more than 3 million to regional parks over that same four-year period. So there's been a number of significant investments in regional parks over the last few years. And as I mentioned at the start, we review requests annually and as we are able to, as priorities

allow. We provide funding annually depending on where the budget's at.

Mr. Love: — I have no more questions this evening, Mr. Chair. And we're getting close to our time here I believe at 9 o'clock. So I'm prepared to wrap up and turn things over to you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Love. Any questions from the rest of the committee? Seeing none, we're going to adjourn consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. I'll start with the minister, if you've got closing comments, and then we'll go to Mr. Love.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well I'd like to thank everyone for . . . I've got four minutes? Thank you very much. Thank all the members from the committee for sitting in tonight. Thank you to the member opposite for the insightful questions. And we look forward to an exciting year in Parks, Culture and Sport and the Status of Women, so thank you everyone. I'd like to thank the officials for attending this evening and helping prepare the estimates for presentation this evening. So thank you very much everyone.

Mr. Love: — Yeah, I'll say a quick thank you to you, Mr. Chair, to our Hansard staff and Procedural Clerks, committee members, and especially to all of our great public servants that work in our province and again really kind of put the best of Saskatchewan on display, whether that's our artists and our productions or whether it's our natural beauty in our parks and outdoor spaces. So thanks for what you do. And thanks for all the work that goes into preparing this year's budget and every year's budget. Thank you.

The Chair: — Okay. Well thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Love. Thank you, committee. Thank you, officials. And thank you, Hansard. That concludes our business for today. I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment. Mr. Ottenbreit has moved. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This committee stands adjourned until 3:15 tomorrow I believe, April 12th, 2022. Thank you everyone. We're adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 20:58.]