



STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE

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Ms. Lisa Lambert
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Mr. Tim McLeod
Moose Jaw North

Mr. Greg Ottenbreit
Yorkton

[The committee met at 15:16.]

The Chair: — Welcome, everyone, to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice. I'm Mark Docherty. I'm the Chair of this committee. And with us today I've got Gary Grewal, Travis Keisig, Tim McLeod, Greg Ottenbreit, and subbing in for Betty Nippi-Albright is Nicole Sarauer.

Today we're considering estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the following votes. 2022-23 estimates: vote 73, Corrections, Policing and Public Safety; vote 92, Firearms Secretariat; vote 91, Integrated Justice Services; vote 3, Justice and Attorney General. 2021-22 supplementary estimates no. 2: vote 73, Corrections, Policing and Public Safety; vote 3, Justice and Attorney General.

**General Revenue Fund
Justice and Attorney General
Vote 3**

Subvote (JU01)

The Chair: — We will begin our consideration with vote 3, Justice and Attorney General, subvote (JU01), central management and services. Minister Wyant 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. Then I'll give an opportunity for Ms. Sarauer to also provide opening comments and then she can ask questions. Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Before I begin, it's appropriate that the Ministry of Justice is here today, it being Be Kind to Lawyers Day. So I would ask that Ms. Sarauer recognize that in her questioning of the Attorney General today.

Mr. Chair, good afternoon. Just to introduce the individuals at the table with me, to my right, Mindy Gudmundson; and to my left, Deputy Minister Glen Gardner.

Well good afternoon, committee. Thanks for the opportunity of speaking to you today. We're pleased to be here to provide the highlights from the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General's 2022-23 financial plan and to answer your questions.

Mr. Chair, every citizen in our province relies on the justice system to provide them access to justice, whether that be criminal, civil, family, or through a tribunal. With our partners in the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, we maintain a fair and equitable justice system that responds to the needs of citizens.

There are over a million court appearances made each year in 83 court points. We coordinate the administration of all the services required to make that happen. We protect vulnerable people in our society, including those that cannot manage their financial matters independently, those that suffer from interpersonal violence and abuse, and children and parents that need support during family breakdown.

We ensure citizens have mechanisms that they can use to resolve disputes with each other, like the Office of Residential Tenancies and the dispute resolution office. We also oversee organizations that allow citizens to resolve disputes with government agencies and police, such as the Automobile Injury Appeal Commission and the Public Complaints Commission. Finally we act as the government's law firm and provide a full range of legal services to the government, including advising it on all legal matters and representing it in the courts.

Throughout the province we have a team of highly skilled, dedicated, and experienced people providing those services, and I'm very grateful for each and every one of them. Today I'm joined by the table, as I mentioned, by Glen Gardner, deputy minister of Justice and deputy attorney general. I would ask officials again, as you've indicated, Mr. Chair, to introduce themselves when they're required to answer any questions.

Mr. Chair, this budget aligns with the government's goals of protecting Saskatchewan people and growing Saskatchewan to ensure a strong economic recovery. We've added permanent funding to continue to provide additional staffing and cleaning within our courthouses. This will allow us to have adequate resources available while we safely address court volumes.

We're implementing a package of initiatives that support our ongoing commitment to access to justice. This includes new resources for family dispute resolution, protection for vulnerable individuals, and enhancements to our provincial justice system. We're also expanding access to justice in the area of family law.

We continue to make significant steps to implement online innovations to modernize processes for ourself and the public. For example, Mr. Chair, we are devoting \$2.7 million to complete the first phase of the e-justice initiative, the provincial offences project. This initiative will allow the public to resolve disputes online without having to travel to a courthouse. In partnership with Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, we are devoting over \$2 million to the expansion of the court's use of video technology to RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] detachments, municipal detention centres, and correctional facilities. Video conferencing has proven itself to be an effective tool in managing inmates' court appearances.

This budget also includes a \$266,000 investment in our Aboriginal court worker program. This funding will allow for increasing the number of court workers to expand services to additional communities. The program has a strong history of Indigenous-inclusive service delivery, and evaluations have consistently demonstrated that the program is highly valued by clients, justice officials, and Indigenous communities.

We're also taking significant steps in improving police oversight in Saskatchewan through this budget. The Public Complaints Commission will receive \$360,000 in additional funding to continue development of the serious incident response team model. The SIRT will investigate all deaths, serious injuries, sexual assaults, and incidents of spousal violence related to the actions of on- and off-duty police officers.

In Saskatchewan, on top of the growing number of major crimes, including home invasions and aggravated assaults, there are over

80 open allegations of murder and attempted murder pending throughout the province. Many of those cases involve multiple accused, gang-affiliated accused, and complex evidentiary and credibility issues. To address this, Mr. Chair, we are establishing a major case assistance unit in public prosecutions and adding funding to support the use of prosecutorial agents. The use of agents will allow experienced staff lawyers to focus on more complex cases which will benefit from their experience and expertise.

The responsibility for the criminal property forfeiture program has been transferred to us from the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. Additional funding of \$1.7 million and nine more staff will enhance the program's investigative and litigation capacities. To address the pressures faced by the Saskatchewan Coroners Service, nearly \$400,000 will be added to this budget. This will also allow for a fee increase to some of its service providers.

In closing, Mr. Chair, the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General is taking significant steps this year to improve the administration of justice in our province. We're proud of our accomplishments over the past year and will continue to collaborate with the courts, our stakeholders, and community partners to achieve greater success in the future.

The funding for '22-23 fiscal year will ensure that the ministry can continue to provide a fair and accessible justice system for the people of this province. And those are the highlights, Mr. Chair. I would now be pleased to answer any questions about the plan and the budget for the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister. It is lawyer appreciation day, as you've said. Mr. Weighill, you're the only one that's allowed to stay, just so you know. Ms. Sarauer, any opening comments, and then the floor is yours.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Minister, for your opening comments. I appreciate them, and I hope you will appreciate me as well if it's lawyer appreciation day, as much as I will appreciate you, Minister Wyant.

I just want to start by saying, while I do very much enjoy the opportunity at any time to speak with yourself, Minister, as well as your deputy minister, it's an absolute pleasure to have all of the officials around you and behind you joining us this afternoon too. I think we can all agree that this will be a much more productive experience on both sides of the table with these very important folks in the room. So just welcome to everybody, and it's really great to see some faces again that we haven't had the opportunity to see, or I haven't had the opportunity to see for a while. I'm sure the two of you have.

I have a lot of questions for you, Minister. And I think I'm going to start on the Kimberly Squirrel inquiry. I understand that that was an internal inquiry that happened with both yourself and the Minister of Corrections signing off. I understand that that's been complete now after . . . If you remember, this was a woman who died in Saskatoon after leaving Pine Grove. Could you provide the committee an update on what the results were of that investigation?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We think that that's probably a better question put to the Minister of Corrections and Policing. We played a small role in that work. Most of that work was done in her ministry, so I think the question would be best asked of her.

Ms. Sarauer: — I will endeavour to ask her and her officials that question in that case.

Minister, you mentioned a few, in your opening remarks, a few implications of COVID to the budget. In particular I believe you mentioned some staffing and cleaning costs for courthouses. Could you elaborate on what the impacts of COVID have been to the justice budget?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We'll have assistant deputy minister Jan Turner just generally speak to it with respect to the courts. Oh, Glennis. Sorry, Glennis.

Ms. Bihun: — Good afternoon. Glennis Bihun, executive director of court services division. Yes, there is a total of 1.6 million that's been allotted to court services' budget, and it's made up of a combination of both salary and operating dollars. It's really to continue implementing health and safety measures into courthouses, as well as to provide resources so that we can safely manage and assist, of course, the courts to manage the workloads.

Ms. Sarauer: — Could you elaborate a little bit more on that, what the particular additions are being provided to courthouses as a result of this increase in budget?

Ms. Bihun: — Yes, for sure. So currently we continue to have a number of guidelines in place, so everything from deep cleanings if there's been an exposure in the courthouse, provision of masks for anyone entering the courthouse who may not have one for themselves. We continue to have extra sheriffs attending jury trials, still using some signage. The physical barriers remain in place, and of course the overall PPE [personal protective equipment] that many of our field staff would need when they're doing their civil enforcement duties, for example.

Ms. Sarauer: — And is that available to all courthouses throughout the province, or are there just some warrant and not others?

Ms. Bihun: — No. No, it is throughout all court facilities in the province regardless of whether it's a courthouse or off-site location.

[15:30]

Ms. Sarauer: — Minister, your ministry provides funding to many community-based organizations. Could you speak to whether or not there has been an increase or a decrease in funding to CBOs [community-based organizations] in this budget?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thanks for that. Just before I do, I just do want to extend my personal appreciation for the work that court services did, Ms. Bihun and her staff, with respect to the provision of services. I know it was very well received by the courts. That was a tremendous amount of work that they did to support the court services and the delivery of judicial services in the province. So I just wanted to make that comment.

There was a 2 per cent overall lift to the CBOs. In the budget there was \$629,000 across the three votes: \$578,000 for IJS [integrated justice services]; there was \$29,000 for CPPS [Corrections, Policing and Public Safety]; and \$22,000 for the AG [Attorney General].

Ms. Sarauer: — So when you say 2 per cent overall, are some CBOs getting more than 2 per cent while others are getting less or is every CBO getting a 2 per cent increase in their budget?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — It's a 2 per cent lift across the board.

Ms. Sarauer: — So every CBO is getting a 2 per cent increase in their budget?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That's right.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Are there any who have received a decrease in funding? And I know that there are some projects that wind down and therefore they may have received funding in the last budget cycle but aren't receiving funding in this budget cycle. And I'd like to know which ones those are as well.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — As I understand, there was no CBOs that got a decrease.

Ms. Sarauer: — And no CBOs who were doing a project last budget cycle who aren't this budget cycle and therefore aren't being funded?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — No.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Last estimates we spoke a little bit about the funding decision to provide some money to United Way's 211 call line that's been operational for about a year or so now. I was wondering if the ministry could provide an update on how that relationship is going.

Mr. Wilby: — Good afternoon. Drew Wilby, assistant deputy minister of community engagement for integrated justice services, and I won't go on with the others because that's far too long. It will take too much time. Yeah, we signed the contract with 211 last year, as you've indicated. It was approximately \$130,000 this year that we'll be providing to 211. That call line is up and running. It's fully functional. As well we have the text line as well as the online portal as well.

We can give you a few stats. From March 1st of 2021 to February 28th of 2022, so for 12 months, their web portal had over 15,000 new users; 22,000 page views; and an average session of 45 seconds. I think what's important with that web portal too is there's an immediate escape — on there — button, so that if someone is there and they're worried about someone seeing what they're doing, they can get out of that.

As I said, they do support people via phone, text, and web chat as well as email. And some stats there: from April 1st, 2021 to March 31st, 2022, their Saskatchewan-based contact centre received 568 unique needs being identified related to abuse, assault, and violence. A caller may have more than one need, of course. And then those calls resulted in zero unmet needs, or in other words, callers were connected to at least one service to meet their need each and every time.

Ms. Sarauer: — So thank you for those statistics. So what you're saying is that there were 568 unique needs for Saskatchewan residents through the 211 line? Is that specific to interpersonal violence?

Mr. Wilby: — That's correct. Yeah, specific to the interpersonal violence portal.

Ms. Sarauer: — And the funding in this budget cycle, is that the same as the amount that was given last budget cycle?

Mr. Wilby: — It'll be annualized this year to that 130,000. So last year of course to get things off the ground and up and running, I think we were close to that, but we will be at the full expense of 130 this year.

Ms. Sarauer: — Has there been any feedback requested from . . . Obviously it would be very difficult to reach out to those who are using this service, calling, but I'm thinking more to the CBOs on the other line who would be connected to these callers. Has there been any feedback requested from the ministry about how this is going?

Mr. Wilby: — Yeah. We're in constant discussions of course with our providers and those that provide those valuable services around the province. We do check in on this on a regular basis. My program managers are out there in the field working with their CBO partners. You know, we haven't heard any significant concerns at this point in time. If there are any, obviously we'd encourage those CBOs to provide that and look to try to rectify those issues.

I think it's important too that we regularly connect with the overarching bodies — SASS [Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan], PATHS [Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan], STOPS [Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnership Solutions to Violence] — to make sure, you know, that they're seeing that the needs of survivors, the needs of those that are needing those services are being met as well.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. Minister, in last year's estimates you mentioned that there was going to be a second domestic violence death review panel. Could you give the committee an update on how that work is going?

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby again. So in terms of the progress, I mean obviously we have this on our goals to ensure that the best possible process is used to make sure that we're doing a comprehensive DVDR — domestic violence death review, I'm sorry — that sort of meets what's required, meets the needs of survivors and others and of course the families of victims that have gone through these terrible issues.

At present, we have done some work and completed work on understanding current best practices, in particular what other jurisdictions have done. We've looked across Canada as well as into countries like New Zealand, who really is an expert in this field, and the work that they've done in terms of establishing their structures. We're looking at establishing a governance structure. A lot of that work has been completed as well.

Moving forward to this spring, we're at a stakeholder

engagement phase where we'll look to reach out to those key stakeholders, have those conversations with them, see what their expectations are out of that, and begin to move forward on those pieces as well as engaging them in the full process. We're establishing the review team in the process this summer, and then of course we'll develop recommendations towards winter of 2022-23.

Something unique to this is that we do want to engage families of those that have lost loved ones to domestic violence, which is something that wasn't included in the 2018 work and we feel is incredibly important if we're going to, you know, try to make some change in this area.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. And you're leading into my next question which is, what was the problem with the initial domestic violence death review structure that's led the ministry to do this work now to create this new structure?

Mr. Wilby: — You know, I don't think there was a problem. I wouldn't word it that way. I would say from every report or review or something as complex and comprehensive as the domestic violence death review, you learn lessons. From that one we learned some lessons in terms of, you know, how to move forward, what we should be looking for, and in particular, that we need to engage with the families, so those that have lost loved ones. That was a key missing link.

I think the other important thing too is to make those recommendations tangible for decision makers. It would be, you know, an onus on us as officials to make sure that there's something that can be actioned out of that to make some difference and make some change, and then also put that accountability to the respective authorities to make sure that that's in place as well. So we've received direction from the minister to move forward on that and make sure that that piece is in place.

Ms. Sarauer: — Sounds like the ministry's doing a lot of work on this. Is there an intention that this panel will be permanent this time?

Mr. Wilby: — We'll continue to look at that as we go ahead. Again, we'll learn lessons from this. Obviously, this'll be about three years, verging on four, from the last one. That seems to be appropriate right now. But again, as we go through the work, we meet with the stakeholders, and in particular, as we meet with the families and have those discussions, we'll take some lessons from them. And then we'll come back, of course, with recommendations pertaining to that.

Ms. Sarauer: — So again, and I'm asking you to repeat yourself, but when is the plan for the review structure to be together so that there can actually be meetings? And then when will the reporting out of those meetings occur?

Mr. Wilby: — Not a problem at all. The governance structure has been established, or it's been completing . . . We're completing that right now. Next would be that stakeholder engagement, which is important to make sure we've got that right and we haven't missed anything. And then the final report we're planning right now. As all good things, we'll cross our fingers on that, would be winter '22-23 to have that report in place.

Ms. Sarauer: — And out of that report will be the recommendations, I'm assuming, as well.

Mr. Wilby: — That's correct. The recommendations and then, you know, how the ministry would respond to those.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. I might as well ask this question because I think this might be Mr. Wilby as well. I'm trying really hard to keep them all together. It's always a struggle, especially when Corrections and Justice aren't in the same room.

You mentioned, Minister, last time we talked in estimates about the interpersonal violence transportation program. I'm wondering if you could provide some more information about that.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So we established the northern transportation and support initiative, which you may know provides services to residents in northern Saskatchewan who are fleeing interpersonal violence and abuse. So there's a number of different transportation models that we use, whether that's taxi, shuttle, or air. But it was a program that we developed to ensure that those who are facing domestic violence in those remote communities are able to access transportation to avail themselves of a safe situation.

Ms. Sarauer: — Before we get started, how do you define northern Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — It's the northern administration district.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay, thank you. Could you provide an update on how that program is going, how much money is being provided, how often it's being used?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So last year was . . . We started the program was kind of a little bit ad hoc, right? But this year there's \$67,000 which is available to support the initiative in the northern district and 96, almost \$97,000 to support the initiative in the South.

Ms. Sarauer: — Do you have numbers of how often it's been used?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We don't have the numbers. Last year, as I said, when we started it, the funding was available through the transition houses, right? So we don't have access to those numbers. Certainly as the program develops, we'll certainly have access to better information. But given the fact that the policy was just created last year and that the funding was delivered through the transition houses, we're not quite . . . we don't have that number.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay, thanks. So just so that I'm clear, last year the funding was provided to transition houses to utilize. And now is the funding still provided to transition houses or is that a more centralized structure?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So as I said, we wanted to reduce barriers to transportation, so there's reimbursement that will be made to organizations that end up accommodating people that are fleeing domestic violence. So there's a number of qualifications for that, but essentially what ends up happening is they're reimbursed for

the transportation costs.

[15:45]

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So it's not funded directly by the ministry, but through the third-party deliverance, right? Transition houses, typically.

Ms. Sarauer: — So an organization will fund the transport of an individual and then will apply to the ministry for reimbursement?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Right. That's right.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. And has there been any feedback from shelters as to how that's working? I imagine shelters operate on a very limited funding structure, so I'm just curious as to how easily they're able to dip into extra cash to be able to get reimbursed by the ministry at a later date.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — As I understand, we haven't had a significant amount of feedback from the organizations, as I say, in the last year that the policy was developed and implemented. But it's certainly something that we want to talk to transition houses about and those that provide those services, to make sure that they're being provided in an efficient and effective manner and that they're meeting the needs of those transition houses, and in particular meeting the needs of those that are fleeing domestic violence.

Ms. Sarauer: — Minister, we spoke briefly in supplemental estimates about the criminal justice review program. I'm wondering if you could provide some more information about that program and how that's going.

Ms. Williams: — Good afternoon. Shannon Williams, assistant deputy attorney general for the justice services division. So just generally the criminal justice system review is a program that . . . or it's an initiative that's been mandated by both ministries, so by both Justice and Attorney General and Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

The mandate of the review is to sort of look in a holistic view of the criminal justice system and see if there's ways that we can initiate some efficiencies, improvements, and look at ways to make some differences and impacts on people, on the citizens of Saskatchewan that are accessing the criminal justice system. They're looking at issues such as bail and remand. They're looking at strengthening police oversight, so they were involved in some of that work that was being done with SIRT.

They're looking at also some issues around supporting First Nation enforcement of laws on-reserve and looking at . . . We also have a criminal justice round table where we invite many stakeholders from the criminal justice system to sit at a round table together and talk about some of the issues that are being faced by citizens and by other stakeholders that are involved in that system.

So they've been doing some of that work and have started that work. And a lot of the work that has been done in the last year since the program initiated has been building relationships, so

going out and trying to establish and build relationships with different stakeholders, including members of the Indigenous communities.

Because I think the idea is that that's where we really need to start in order to get the feedback and talk to the people who are raising issues, concerns, or that have had lots of contact with the system — different individuals that have had contact with the system, stakeholders that have an involvement in it — to be able to give us some of that feedback so that we can look at what issues are present and what we can do to make improvements.

Ms. Sarauer: — What sort of work is being done on remand in particular?

Ms. Williams: — Well we have had some involvement with remand, and a lot of that work is also being done looking through the research and implementation branch of the Ministry of Justice or integrated justice services. So they've been looking, doing a lot of data on remand and bail. And I think perhaps Drew Wilby might be better to speak to that because that's his area and he probably has more information to provide to you about that.

Ms. Sarauer: — I'm just trying to figure out, to parse out what parts . . . If IJS is doing that work, what are the unique things that this review project is planning to do and implement?

Ms. Williams: — So some of the work . . . I mean this is a single unit that has individuals who are able to kind of go out and do some of that front-line work. So they're going out into and reviewing sort of process within court flow, sitting in the courthouses and watching court flow and meeting with people, talking to individuals who are going through the court system and talking to the individuals who are working within the court system, including court clerks and things like that, to get some of the feedback about the system overall, to see if there's process improvements that might be able to be made through that kind of contact with individuals.

So that's unique in that that's something that they have the time and the ability to do, actually to go out and sit and chat with people, which most people, or most other individuals working within the system, don't have that kind of time to actually devote to actually getting that direct feedback from both employees and individuals that are accessing the system.

So they're doing some of that work as well, and they're really looking at it from more of a high-level perspective to see what process improvements might be able to be made. And where they see those, they're trying to make some of those impacts immediately, or making some recommendations directly as they see some of those process improvements may be able to be made.

So I think that is unique in terms of some of the work that this review can do. A lot of it really is reviewing some work that . . . even some of the reports that have been done previously that have identified some concerns, like some of the reports on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, some of the reports on truth and reconciliation that have identified, you know, concerns or issues, and then looking at those and looking at ways that we might be able to make some improvements through some of the reports and the plans that have already come out.

Ms. Sarauer: — Is there a timeline on the work in this unit that needs to be completed? I'm just wondering if there will be a report generated. What sort of accountability measures are happening in this unit?

Ms. Williams: — Initially when we started this process, we initially anticipated a two-year timeline. Clearly the pandemic has interfered with our plans on that, as it has with many plans, in terms of developing relationships with people and being able to establish that. A lot of that work needs to happen face to face, and we've been unable to do some of those initial contacts because of the pandemic.

It's going to go much longer than the two-year plan, and so we're still in that phase of sort of doing a lot of those initial relationship buildings, meeting with stakeholders, chatting with people, trying to get some of that initial feedback so that process improvements can be made. I suspect this process will take much longer than the initial two-year plan, so we're continuing that as we go forward.

Ms. Sarauer: — And to the second part of my question, is there going to be a report generated? Or it sounds like the suggestions are as you go. But I'm just wondering how we'll know what sort of recommendations have come out of this unit and what sort of changes have been made.

Ms. Williams: — I think the plan, as you indicated, is that a lot of the changes as we identify them will be implemented as we go or will be recommended as we go. Any other initiatives or changes that may come from this, I think, will be integrated into the budget process and into the budget plan as we move forward.

As you can imagine, if there are concerns or any recommendations that need to be made in the criminal justice system, that has a direct impact on the individuals who come into contact with it. I think it's important to do those changes as we see them if we can. If there's places where we can make those changes, we want to do that as we can. So that would be the initial plan with this. And then if there's, you know, bigger initiatives that might be looked at after the fact, those would be things that would be implemented into the budget process as we move forward.

Ms. Sarauer: — I understand the pandemic has slowed down your work, but I'm wondering if there have been already recommendations to changes that have been made as a result of the work that this unit is doing.

Ms. Williams: — Certainly there's been lots of communication that has happened as we've met with individuals and as, you know, some of the reviews have been taking place. They're really integrated into the work that's being done in a lot of different areas across both ministries and integrated justice services. So there the team, the CJSR [criminal justice system review] team, is integrated and meeting and collaborating with individuals and integrated justice services in JAG [Justice and Attorney General] and in CPPS. It's very much a collaborative approach.

Some of that work, as I've mentioned, is being done at the criminal justice round table. So I think there's a lot of discussions and comments and feedback being given as they go through and meet individuals and make relationships and see the process. In

terms of, like, a specific example, I don't think we have that yet. As I indicated, I think a lot of this has been building relationships over the past year as much as we possibly can and going out and meeting people and identifying what people's issues have been or historically have been and where we can potentially make change and have impact.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay, thank you. How much in the budget is allocated to this work?

Ms. Williams: — I believe the budget is . . . It's about 415,000, I believe. Yeah. I'm getting the nod, 415,000.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. I have a few questions about the Aboriginal court worker program. Could you speak as to — you mentioned there's a \$266,000 allocation in this budget — whether or not that's an increase from the year previous, and what that will mean in terms of number of court workers in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There's a \$266,000 increase for a total budget in the Aboriginal court worker program of \$1.733 million. As you know, this is a matching program with the federal government. They match the contributions that we make. It's going to expand, allow us to expand the program by adding 35 new court workers over the next four years.

So I think we've seen some examples of how successful this program has been in terms of the services that are provided in the courtroom. So we're very pleased to see that the expansion, the additional money is being put in and taking up some space, of course, that the federal government had left. So we're thankful for the support of the federal government, the program, and our ability now to expand it.

Ms. Sarauer: — So you said 34 court workers?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thirty-five.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thirty-five, sorry. And. . .

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Over four years.

Ms. Sarauer: — Over four years. So you're anticipating that you will be maintaining this level of funding over the next four years?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That's our expectation. Of course we continue to have dialogue with the federal government with respect to their commitment to this program, and one of the things that we talk to the federal government about in terms of whether they're prepared to enhance programming to this particular area. So that's a conversation that we'll continue to have with the federal government, but it's certainly our expectation that this level of funding will be maintained over the next number of years.

Ms. Sarauer: — How many court workers are being planned to be hired in this budget cycle? Additional, sorry.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — How many additional ones?

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well we're going to be able to expand it by 35.

Ms. Sarauer: — Oh, it's not . . . You said 35 over four years. I thought that meant a gradual hiring.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well 35 over four years. In terms of how many are going to be added in each particular year, is that your question?

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah. Yeah, in this budget year.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We're expecting to add five to the complement this year.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. And can you describe for the committee how the Aboriginal court worker program will compare to the Aboriginal court worker program as it existed in 2016?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Jan Turner, the assistant deputy minister, will respond to that.

Ms. Turner: — Okay. Good afternoon, and thank you for the introduction, Minister. Yes. So as you recall, of course there was a diminishing of positions about four or five years ago now. We're building it back up. So the increment this year doesn't get us all the way back, but over the course of the next four years it will get us further than where we were when the program was diminished.

And that includes both support for criminal justice work, which has been the historic model, but it also expands the family court work which is evident in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. But it allows us to spread that through the province as well.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. How many Aboriginal court workers existed in 2016?

Ms. Turner: — I would have to send you that number if I could, or I could look it up. I believe . . . I'm going to just take a guess. I think we had about 35 in total. Right now we have about 18, so we're getting back to that number. But we will surpass it with the additional 35 in addition to the 18 that we have right now.

Ms. Sarauer: — And that 18 was since 2017. Is that correct?

Ms. Turner: — Correct, yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. And that was because the provincial government cut the funding for that. Is that correct?

[16:00]

Ms. Turner: — There was a diminishing at the time, yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah. Okay. And as you mentioned, Minister, there's been a lot of positive feedback about the Aboriginal court worker program, of course. I'm happy to see it scale up again, but it's frustrating to see a . . . essentially having to scale up skills and capabilities again after this government cut the funding to what was an incredibly important program for the citizens of Saskatchewan.

I'm curious to know how many of . . . Including the additional new court workers, how many will be for criminal and how many will be for family and what parts of the province you plan to have them work.

Ms. Turner: — Thank you for that question. I think the program you're familiar with, right now we have dedicated criminal court workers in most parts of the province, and we have the family court work support as dedicated folks in the three centres that I mentioned.

So in going forward, we're kind of re-envisioning all of this and hoping to make the court workers kind of a dual court worker, if you will, so that they can handle family cases and criminal cases in some of the smaller centres. For the larger centres, the dedication is required. But when you think of many of our court points, our 83 different court points we have in the province, we have court workers covering a number of those points. With additional training and supports, they will be able to take some of those family cases as well. So that's our vision, and we'll be working away on that over the course of the next few years.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. And will this program be managed by a dedicated manager, or will it be an individual who has a few different files on their plate?

Ms. Turner: — So currently we have a dedicated director of court worker services, and they will continue in that role. And we will augment some of their supports actually to be able to manage this program.

Ms. Sarauer: — Could you elaborate on what you mean by augmenting their supports? Sorry, I just don't understand what you're saying.

Ms. Turner: — Well as the program grows, they may need additional support for training, oversight of all of these different court workers. They might need a little more financial assistance as well.

Now those are contributed by other people in the division, and that may be the plan. I'm speaking a little ahead of myself because this is exactly the plan that we want to work out in the coming months and weeks. But a program like this is only successful if you can support all of the operational elements to it, and we're dedicated to doing that as well.

Ms. Sarauer: — Absolutely. Thank you for that. And like I mentioned, Minister, I've heard from, over the past six years, many in the community, those who are in the CBO sector, those who are practising law, as well as those in the judiciary who were quite upset when the reduction occurred in 2017. So I am glad to see that that path has been reversed in this budget and hopeful to see how this program will continue to flourish in the many years to come.

I'm wondering if you could provide some more information about the family intervention rapid support teams.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So I'll speak a little bit about this, but I might ask Mr. Wilby to kind of add a few comments to it. You'll know that the first FIRST [family intervention rapid support team] in the fall of '21 was established in Kindersley through the

West Central Crisis & Family Support Centre. In February of this year we expanded that to support families in Moose Jaw, Estevan, Weyburn, Carlyle, and the Nipawin areas.

The FIRST program supports families who display risks for violence, risk factors for violence, and providing kind of an early-intervention outreach approach to that. So we've seen some success in this in the initial rollout in Kindersley, and that's why the additional resources have been put in the budget to expand the program.

That will be my introduction, and maybe I'll ask Mr. Wilby just to provide a few extra comments.

Mr. Wilby: — Thanks, Minister. Drew Wilby again. The minister pretty much hit it on, that we started with West Central in Kindersley, providing good service there, went out to market and basically asked the proponents. What we're looking at is sort of an outcome-based framework of saying, look, here's the idea of where we want to go — how are you going to get there? — rather than telling them what to do, asking for those outcomes.

And so the Moose Jaw Transition House is receiving 76,000; North East Outreach in Nipawin, 200,000; and Envision, which is the Estevan, Weyburn, and Carlyle area, which we're very happy to see those three communities encompassed, is receiving 226; for a total of \$642,688 this year.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Could you walk me through what the Kindersley program looked like and its successes?

Mr. Wilby: — For sure. In terms of Kindersley, I mean they're still in development, I would suggest. They were from a ground up looking at, how do we build this out? What does that look like?

So they've been working with clients now for about six months. In that time, they've hosted 24 community education sessions to share information about the program, develop partnerships with the RCMP, Education, and the Saskatchewan Health Authority, which of course is crucial on this file. And they've averaged four connections with new or engaged families per day.

We know the acuteness in the Kindersley area, and of course, stemming from a very significant incident that happened there a few years ago and that shook that community pretty hard. So so far, teams in Weyburn, Estevan, Carlyle, Moose Jaw, and Nipawin have just recently started accepting clients as of February of 2022. And we expect to have further data from all four of those communities in the next year.

Ms. Sarauer: — When you say accepting clients, can you elaborate on what you mean by that?

Mr. Wilby: — Sure. Reaching out to those clients, potentially those families that are most in need and engaging with them to provide those supports for those that are at risk of violence and especially, you know, as it affects largely, as it often does in this area, women and children, mothers and children. So looking to increase the number of families with developed and implemented safety plans who are at risk of violence as well, so making sure they have effective safety plans in place if something were to happen.

And as I talk about this, I mean, I wish we didn't have a need for this, of course, but I mean, obviously we need the support and the wraparound that's there. We want to lower families' overall number of risk factors and risk levels for violence; of course, if we can, deal with the perpetrators of that violence as well; lower the overall likelihood that the family will experience further violence; reduce the need for individuals and families to access emergency services in response to that violence; lower the likelihood of adverse childhood experiences, because of course we know children that experience violence oftentimes will become perpetrators of violence themselves; and provide individuals and families with greater access to information about the dynamics of family violence.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. I appreciate it. Minister, let's talk operational funding for second-stage shelters. Could you explain why that is not included in this budget despite almost every other province in the country including it in their budgets?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — So your question's specific to second-stage housing?

Ms. Sarauer: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I think I'll refer that question to the Minister of Social Services, who's responsible for that area. We can certainly talk about our funding for transition houses and the support that we give to transition houses, but as it relates directly to second-stage housing, I think those are questions better put to the Minister of Social Services.

Ms. Sarauer: — So just so I'm clear, because that's a change, the Minister of Social Services is now responsible for operational funding for second-stage shelters?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well you'll put those questions to her with respect to operational funding and whether or not that funding . . . I think the questions have been put in the House a number of times in terms of operational funding. We can speak specifically to transition houses which are the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice.

Ms. Sarauer: — This is a conversation we've had a few years, so this seems like a change in who is managing what. Why have second-stage shelters been moved away from Justice and to Social Services?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I'll have Mr. Wilby just address the issue.

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby again. Just to sort of come off where the minister's said there, I mean obviously second-stage housing across the board would be a shared responsibility amongst a variety of agencies. In terms of funding right now we provide to the emergency shelters, as you're well aware, about \$7.5 million a year to the transition houses across the province. We continue to look at that model and see how that's working and where that's going.

You know, we've looked at new investments over the last couple of years. In particular last year we had about \$800,000 in new investments towards interpersonal violence and abuse across the province. We continue to work with groups such as SOFIA House in Regina, Hope Restored in Saskatoon, and have

conversations with them about their needs and where they're at. And we'll continue to do that. I believe we're meeting with SOFIA House here in the next couple of weeks to have further discussions about what it is that they're seeing, what's happening in the Regina area in particular, and what their ongoing operational needs may be.

Ms. Sarauer: — So I have a few questions that flow out of your response, Mr. Wilby. So I understand that you're meeting with the two second-stage shelters that you have mentioned. They're going to ask you for funding for operational dollars. Why would these organizations be meeting with the Ministry of Justice if the Ministry of Justice is saying that they don't make the decision anymore as to whether or not they'll be funded operationally?

Mr. Wilby: — Yeah, as I sort of said in the initial comments there, that it's a bit of a shared responsibility to the capital side. And if there was a new build on the capital, it would be the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation and Social Services.

[16:15]

The operational side, when the authorities for the transition houses transferred years ago, the authority for second-stage housing didn't transfer with it, but that doesn't mean that it's, you know, it's not partially shared responsibility with the Ministry of Justice. So through the integrated justice services and the interesting collection of responsibilities that we have and the structure that we have, as you're all too familiar and aware of, part of this does definitely fall to us in terms of one of our key stakeholder groups and what that looks like.

And so you know, what we're really interested in doing is diving into the data. We haven't had good data coming from the transition houses for years. Part of that's our fault because we haven't had good systems to provide for them. We do have that now. And we've got some of that data that's coming through to see what that churn looks like, what those gaps look like, and especially what the gap on the long-term side of the housing equation looks like as well.

As well working with Social Services in terms of their housing stock that they have, what's available, and what could work for this clientele. I mean this is largely single moms and kids that are coming through. Does the housing stock that they have work for that? And how can we better collectively work together?

There's been some good work on that, not to bore you with bureaucracy, but at the official level in terms of breaking some of those artificial barriers between Social Services, ourselves, the Status of Women office down, working through things like the inter-ministerial committee on interpersonal violence and abuse to figure out, you know, where collectively can we work on this going forward?

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. So what I'm hearing is a lot of work within the Ministry of Justice to work with other ministries on this important issue, which is interpersonal violence and the importance of breaking down silos, as well as the recognition that the Ministry of Justice has in the work that second-stage shelters do. So it sounds to me like the Ministry of Justice should be able to provide me with an answer as to why there was no operational funding for second-stage shelters in this

budget.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I think as Mr. Wilby has kind of alluded to, the fact that there was no money in this budget doesn't mean that we don't consider a number of these projects to be important, and we'll be giving some consideration to them as we move forward.

So I think it's been fairly clear in terms of what this government's commitment has been in terms of issues around interpersonal violence, a number of initiatives that have come forward from this government. And we'll continue to press those issues and work on other issues and other programs with respect to interpersonal violence. But in this year's budget there was no operational funding for second-stage housing. That doesn't mean that we're not going to be thinking about what programs might be appropriate in the future.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. So based on that comment, when these organizations are looking for operational dollars, should they be making that request to the Ministry of Justice or to the Ministry of Social Services?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Those requests should come to the Ministry of Justice.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Minister, in 2020 in estimates I was told by you and your officials that the Minister for Status of Women was going to review . . . do a jurisdictional scan of second-stage shelter funding. My colleague in estimates last night with the Minister for Status of Women asked for a follow-up on that report. It doesn't sound as if that had been done, so I'm curious to know if the Ministry of Justice has done this work or not.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I understand that there was a review that was done with respect to a jurisdictional scan with respect to what other provinces were doing in regards to funding second-stage housing.

Ms. Sarauer: — Right. Were there any recommendations that came out of that review?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I'm not aware of any.

Ms. Sarauer: — Being cognizant of the time, I'd like to ask some questions of the coroner's office, if that's all right. Minister, I'm wondering if you or Mr. Weighill could provide the committee with some updated statistics in the office. I understand last time we had the opportunity to chat at supplemental estimates, there was quite a spike in files that you were dealing with. Mr. Weighill, could you provide the committee with some more information?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I'll have you ask Mr. Weighill to provide those updates if that's all right.

Mr. Weighill: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Clive Weighill, Chief Coroner for the province of Saskatchewan. Would you just like an overview of the work that we've been doing and what the picture of Saskatchewan is right now?

Ms. Sarauer: — Please, yeah.

Mr. Weighill: — Okay. The number of investigations for the Saskatchewan Coroners Service has gone up quite dramatically. If you go back one decade, we were handling about 1,818 investigations, and now we're handling about 2,921. So it's, you know, a third in increase in the amount of investigations that we're doing.

If you're looking at the average caseload for a coroner, a community coroner, which would be somebody that services a small centre, their average on files have gone from 15 to 30 files per year. And our full-time coroners in Regina and Saskatoon, going back to 2016, they were at around 99 files on average, and now they're up to about 180 files on average, so a very, very busy service right now.

I guess the next question is, what's driving that increase, I would imagine you'd ask. So I cleverly have that answer ready for you. The general increase in population, specifically in an aging population, is causing us quite a few more calls. We're having, you know, elderly individuals that are unfortunately passing away in their residence. If they do pass away in their residence, the police are called, EMS [emergency medical services] is called, and naturally the Coroners Service is always called as well too. So just for the aging population, we're seeing an increase there.

One of the biggest drivers, though, is the increase in drugs, drug toxicity. And if we go back and look at the numbers for drug toxicity — so we go back again a decade — we had about 86 deaths in the province of Saskatchewan due to drug overdose. And in 2021 we had 446 deaths, so a huge increase in that. And that's nothing that's particularly just happening in Saskatchewan; that's happened right across Canada. We've all known what's happened in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and now we're seeing it in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

So far this year, of January 1st to March 31st, we have 121 confirmed or suspected drug overdose deaths in the province. So if that trend continues, we would hit around probably about 484 deaths for Saskatchewan. So the trend is not decreasing one bit. If anything, unfortunately, it still is increasing.

That causes a cascading effect for our workload and our budget naturally because of the amount of drug toxicity deaths. Many of those individuals unfortunately don't have any medical history, so that compels us then to do an autopsy. So our number of autopsies since 2016, we were doing about 477 autopsies. Last year, the fiscal year 2021-22, we did 935 autopsies. So we've seen an increase of about 458 autopsies over that amount of time.

And a forensic pathologist can do around 200 to 225 autopsies in a year with all the other work they have to do — court appearances and reports, etc. So that's meant we had to hire two forensic pathologists, which is a fairly big dollar. They're, you know, experts in their field and medical doctors.

And I think the biggest increase that we've seen overall is the increase in transportation costs, because every time somebody's deceased at a residence or in a hospital and has to be taken for autopsy, we have to transport that deceased either to Regina or Saskatoon to conduct that autopsy. And we've seen since 2016, we were spending \$512,000 on transportation. And last fiscal year, '21-22, we spent \$1,000,091. So it's a big increase because

of the amount of autopsies.

So as I mentioned, the more calls we go to, it's just a cascading effect. We are doing more investigations. The investigation time and cost is going up. The amount of autopsies we're doing is going up. The amount of transportation we're doing is going up.

Ms. Sarauer: — You mentioned hiring two new forensic pathologists. What is the wait time for getting forensic pathology reports right now?

Mr. Weighill: — I'm proud to say we've gone down from about 197 days to 99 days, so we've gone down from about six months to three months.

Ms. Sarauer: — And you mentioned the pressure experienced by your office due to transportation costs. Is that a service that's contracted out to third parties or is that provided in-house?

Mr. Weighill: — In the Regina area we have a contracted transport company, and in the Saskatoon-Prince Albert area we have another transport company. And mainly the rest of the province is done by funeral homes. They do transportation for us.

Ms. Sarauer: — Do they then bill that work to you afterwards?

Mr. Weighill: — Yes, we get billed for that. If it's a coroner's case, it gets billed to us, yes. So if we're bringing somebody for an autopsy, for instance, we would pay that bill.

Ms. Sarauer: — Who are the two contracts with in the locations that you had mentioned?

Mr. Weighill: — Omega . . .

Ms. Sarauer: — And sorry, and how much are they for?

Mr. Weighill: — Pardon me?

Ms. Sarauer: — How much, too? Or I guess it's just ongoing, I suppose, no matter how much it is.

Mr. Weighill: — It's ongoing.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Then who are they with then? I'll let you answer the question you were going to.

Mr. Weighill: — Okay, first off I'll answer the question. The fees that they're paid are found in *The Coroners Regulations, 2000*, so they're paid by whatever the regulations are in the fees. So there's different fees for . . . if there's a barrier or a heavier person, you have to bring an extra person to help move the decedent out, the body, there's an extra charge for that. And all those things kind of add up, mileage charges and things along that line.

Ms. Sarauer: — Sorry, can you name the two . . . You tried to and then I interrupted you.

Mr. Weighill: — Sorry. Okay, yeah.

Ms. Sarauer: — And I apologize. Could you name the two companies?

Mr. Weighill: — Omega Transfer is in Regina. And you know what? The name just escapes me right now for Saskatoon. I'm sorry.

Ms. Sarauer: — That's okay. You could endeavour to provide the committee with that information at a later date.

Mr. Weighill: — Sure.

Ms. Sarauer: — I understand this has created quite a pressure in your office, as you had described in many different ways of the cascading effect that the drug crisis has resulted in the coroner's office. What increase in funding to the coroner's office has occurred in this budget cycle?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — The Chief Coroner has the answer. So he's got it right there.

Mr. Weighill: — We'll receive \$150,000 towards the community coroner work, so for the additional investigations and the fees that we pay, another \$145,000 for post-mortem examination costs that we're spending, and another \$78,000 for fee increases. Under the regulations there were several fees for the community coroner work and for inquest coroners and counsel that hadn't been increased since 2008. So we requested some increases for there.

Ms. Sarauer: — What further recommendations for changes do you have for your office that haven't yet been implemented?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — We have a status of implementation of certain review recommendations that came from the coroner's office with the list of recommendations and where they are. We're certainly prepared to give you a copy and table a copy with the committee.

Ms. Sarauer: — That would be great. And I want to ask specifically about the recommendation around the child death review committee. Could you provide some detail as to the status of that recommendation?

Mr. Weighill: — Yes. I'm chairing an ad hoc stakeholders' committee now. And I won't have all the names in my head here right now but on that committee is Health, Mental Health, Social Services, police, prosecutions, Corrections, Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, University of Saskatchewan. There's about 40 representatives on that stakeholder committee.

We've been working to build up a business case, a proposal to give to executive government on the merits of a child death review. We've, through the Coroners Service we've commissioned the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute to do a paper for us that would provide our senior executive the pros and cons of having a child death review in the province of Saskatchewan.

[16:30]

Ms. Sarauer: — Does it exist in other provinces?

Mr. Weighill: — Yes it does. There's one in Nova Scotia, Ontario, and British Columbia.

Ms. Sarauer: — And what would be the purpose of that review?

Mr. Weighill: — The purpose would be from different points of view that pediatric doctors across . . . This would be all the child deaths under the age of 21. So pediatric doctors would be interested in cases that are happening to pediatrics. If they can try to prevent . . . if we can examine these to prevent future deaths. Social Services may have an interest in deaths that have occurred in children that may or may not have been in their care. Certainly the Saskatchewan Coroners Service is interested in why children are dying. The child advocate is interested in the information.

So there's many, many stakeholders right across. That's why we have so many people on that stakeholder committee. It just depends which ministry or which agency you come from, would be interested in needing that information.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. And when do you anticipate that that report and those recommendations will come out?

Mr. Weighill: — I'm hoping that I'll have a report to give up to senior government in summer.

Ms. Sarauer: — Sounds good. I'm sure senior government is looking forward to receiving it. I'm very interested to see where this recommendation goes.

Moving back to the numbers of deaths due to drug toxicity that your office is seeing, could you provide the committee with any information as to patterns — or is there something that you're seeing, your office is seeing, those who you work with — that flow out of the staggering amount of deaths that your office is dealing with right now?

Mr. Weighill: — You know, this is probably one of the most complex things that we have facing us right now for such a big issue, because there isn't just one cohort or one segment that's involved with this.

So we're seeing probably, on average, the average person perishing from that is in their 30s or early 40s. So it's not youth that's involved. So there's different reasons. It could be somebody that was on opioids and now they're harder to get, opioids, because the physicians are clamping down on the use of opioids. So people who can't get their prescriptions are finding it illegally.

It could be somebody that's in a depressed mood that's using opioids. It could be somebody that's trying it for the first time. It could be peer pressure. So it's not just one segment that we're working with and that's why it's so difficult to really get a handle on.

I know British Columbia has specifically done a lot of work on that. Our province has been doing work on that. Every province, right across North America, probably worldwide actually, is doing a lot of work. Because there is just no single cohort to really work with.

Ms. Sarauer: — Similar to that question, are you seeing any patterns socio-economically, or is it all across the board?

Mr. Weighill: — It's right across the board, yes. And right across

the province.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. And thank you for the work that you and your office do.

Being cognizant of the time, I have some questions around the Office of Residential Tenancies. In particular, I understand that the office is moving to more of an online system. Could you speak more to how that work is going and where that's at right now?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I think I'll have Assistant Deputy Minister Kylie Head just answer that, but certainly the system is operational now, and some details of it . . . I'll let Kylie answer.

Ms. Head: — Thank you, Minister. So beginning March 3rd, we did turn on the online system and we have been working with stakeholders, you know, since then to work on the implementation. So it's only been a few weeks at this time.

We do have a full-time staff person who is dedicated to doing nothing but helping people navigate and use the new system, because we recognize that there's a lot of people who are technologically challenged, who, you know, aren't really able to use this. So we have somebody whose full-time job assigned for the, you know, for the . . . No time limit on this, but they're going to be just there full-time, accessible by phone, to help people navigate the system.

As well, we also have computers, phones, scanners in the Regina and Saskatoon offices. So anybody who doesn't have their own personal computer equipment can go to either the Regina or Saskatoon office and make use of the facilities there as well, again with assistance from staff in order to be able to help them do this. So that would be in addition to going to, like your local public library for example and being able to use, you know, the public terminals if you don't have your own computer. So you can . . . We're actually trying to make sure that there's dedicated space and assistance for people right in those offices.

So I would say that the reception outside of Saskatoon and Regina is really exciting. People are talking about how, you know, they would have had to go perhaps in person to the Regina or Saskatoon offices before. They don't have to do that anymore. The online system has a lot of advantages for people.

It's kind of like the old land titles system where people would fill out a packet and they'd do it wrong and it would get rejected and it would go back. That's the same sort of thing that happens with the manual ORT [Office of Residential Tenancies] applications, is people don't fill in a certain box. They miss it, right, and they send their forms in. They mail them in only to find out that it can't be processed and has to go back to them. So all of that delay now is gone, because the computer won't let you hit the submit button until you've actually completed your application.

So there are challenges though — we recognize that — for some individuals who are, you know, not technologically proficient, which is why we're trying to make extra effort in this transition time to really help people with that. And we're also working with CLASSIC [Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City Inc.] and Pro Bono around their clientele. So I personally met with them yesterday and talked to them about

their concerns, and we're working with them to make sure that we try to, you know, do this as well as we can for everyone.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah, you alluded to . . . Those are some of the concerns I've heard as well. In addition, I actually stumbled across, just by happenstance, a *Globe and Mail* article that came out today on the challenges that Ontario has faced in moving to their online system. The title of this article that I'm looking at right now is, "Move to online landlord hearings leaves renters feeling left out," dated April 12th in the *Globe and Mail*. And I won't read the entirety of this article into the record, but I urge the minister to look at it.

As you had mentioned, Ms. Head, of course there are some barriers for many when you talk about moving to a more technological-based online system. Hearings, ORT hearings, are they all going to be virtually now? Or will there still be in-person hearings as well?

Ms. Head: — The hearings haven't really been done in person during COVID at all, right?

Ms. Sarauer: — Right.

Ms. Head: — So it's already been functional for the last couple of years. My understanding is actually that they switched to not having in-person hearings in advance of COVID. So it actually wasn't done as a response to COVID. It was something that was in the works anyway, and it has been successfully carried out for the last couple of years.

Ms. Sarauer: — So there is no plan to move back to in-person hearings in the . . .

Ms. Head: — No. The way the hearings are set up now is that hearings are held only in the morning and, you know, by doing them remotely, we have access to more people who can conduct hearings, you know, simultaneously across the province.

So we've really seen an increase in how quickly decisions can be rendered, so that's really terrific to see. Almost all decisions are rendered the same day that an application is made now, so that a hearing takes place . . . So the hearing takes place in the morning and the adjudicator will write their decision in the afternoon and release it that same day. So it's, you know, a really good turnaround time for applicants that we didn't have in the past.

Ms. Sarauer: — So those hearings are by phone?

Ms. Head: — Yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — And how does that work for individuals who don't have access to a phone? They would have to go to a public space, to the library, or if they live Regina or Saskatoon, to one of the ORT offices to be able to participate in their hearing?

Ms. Head: — I think that that could be accurate. I think most people would know somebody who has a phone that might be able to assist them. I don't know that people are . . . For the most part, I haven't heard that we've had issues with people being unable to participate because they don't have a phone.

Ms. Sarauer: — What about in-person assistance at the Regina

and Saskatoon office? Will that continue indefinitely?

Ms. Head: — So what we are doing is we're encouraging people to use the new system, but we recognize that not everybody's capable of that. So for now, we haven't put a time limit on it but for now we are saying, yes, that we are going to continue to provide that counter service. And then we're going to be monitoring, you know, over the future how it goes and, you know, what the issues are.

So right now anybody who is having issues for one reason or another, all they have to do is just flag it that they require an accommodation, and then they can be helped outside of the system.

Ms. Sarauer: — Except for the hearing piece. That will always remain not in person.

Ms. Head: — The hearing piece is telephone, yeah. Yeah. Which has occurred already for the last few years.

Ms. Sarauer: — Now I understand to be able to file an application now you need a Saskatchewan.ca account. Is that correct?

Ms. Head: — Yes, that is correct. So that's one of the issues that we discussed with CLASSIC yesterday, because this is part of a government-wide initiative, the Saskatchewan.ca. So that's not something that's really particularly controlled or driven by the Ministry of Justice. We work inside of a larger system, and so we are helping them to raise their concerns centrally with the IT [information technology] people who have access to that system and control how it operates.

We understand the concerns that they're raising, but it's not something that we at Justice have control over. So I've just assured them that we're not intending to abandon them to the wolves, you know, that we're here to talk to them about the concerns. But it's not something that I can personally change. It's at a higher level in government how Saskatchewan.ca is run.

Ms. Sarauer: — So just for the purposes of this committee, those concerns are specifically around . . . Well there are many concerns but mainly around some privacy concerns about having all of the different ministries that your Saskatchewan.ca account is linked to and the importance that there's privacy and confidentiality when individuals are accessing different pieces of the judicial system, including the Office of Residential Tenancies, as well as the ability for CBOs like CLASSIC and Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan and their volunteers to be able to help with individuals being able to make those applications, because they would need to know the person they're assisting's account username and password to be able to help them with their forms.

Ms. Head: — For now we are just accommodating CLASSIC and just doing things the old-fashioned way in order to provide service. And you know, we're trying to assist them in navigating the system and raising the concerns.

Saskatchewan.ca is the way the Government of Saskatchewan has chosen to set things up, right, so we're operating in that larger system. And I know it's not affecting, you know, just ORT. It's other systems as well where this is also a concern. I know that

we have flagged specifically to the tech people to look at the privacy issue and have that addressed as soon as possible. We just can't do it kind of overnight.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. PBLS [Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan] also does this work. Is this accommodation expanded to PBLS as well as CLASSIC?

Ms. Head: — Sorry. Yes it is. I met with both of them. It was a joint meeting.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Just for the purposes of this committee, I'm glad you met with the organizations yesterday. I was also cc'd to the letter that the minister had received from those organizations, expressing many concerns about moving to an online system, especially for those who access what are supposed to be some of our most accessible core processes, and the ORT core process being one of them, combined with other jurisdictions also seeing challenges. And I pointed to Ontario's experience right now having challenges with vulnerable populations being able to access their respective ORTs.

And I just want to highlight the importance of ensuring that when Justice in particular moves to — and there is, has been a pattern of moving towards more online services — that those with precarious housing situations, intellectual or physical disabilities, seniors, or those who have English not as a first language, be taken into account when these changes are made. Because as we all know here, access to our justice services is an incredibly important thing that needs to be preserved for everybody in this province, not just those who have access to online capabilities.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I have received the letter from PBLS and we're in the process of responding to that. But I think the progress that we've made in the Ministry of Justice around access to justice issues I think stands for itself. We're going to continue to do that work, of course, without unduly prejudicing anybody's ability to access the system.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Thank you. Did you want to say . . . I didn't want to interrupt you.

Ms. Head: — I was just going to add, because you mentioned specifically languages and accessibility, that that's something the ORT really, really focuses on. So I'm not sure if you're aware that they have informational videos available in 22 languages on the internet, including, you know, many languages that wouldn't immediately come to mind, and they have an incredibly diverse staff so they speak a lot of different languages there as well. So that's another area of access to justice that they're really focused on.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. On the issue of access to justice, would the ministry . . . I know that CLASSIC has been asking for a multi-year transfer agreement for some time now. What is the ministry's position on a multi-year commitment to funding CLASSIC?

[16:45]

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There's certainly an ongoing conversation going on within the Ministry of Justice in respect of the delivery of legal services, whether it's through Pro Bono or other

organizations. So this is a topic of ongoing conversation within the ministry.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay, thank you. Being cognizant of the time, I'd like to speak a little bit about the Lloydminster Provincial Court closure that occurred about a year ago. Could you explain why that decision was made?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well as you know, the Chief Judge reviews these kinds of things from time to time and assesses circuit points based on certain workloads. And so the decision was made in consultation with the Ministry of Justice that that particular court point be closed and operated as a circuit point out of the city of North Battleford.

It's a single court point, and oftentimes single court points aren't the best when it comes to efficient operation. It was the view of the Chief Judge that the operations in Lloydminster could be converted to a circuit point, continuing to use the existing courthouse, without jeopardizing or impairing the delivery of those services in that community.

Ms. Sarauer: — Just to clarify, was it the Chief Judge who recommended the courthouse closure or you, Minister, or your office?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — These decisions are made in consultation with the Chief Judge.

Ms. Sarauer: — Swift Current, Meadow Lake, Estevan . . . Oh, sorry.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Just to confirm, ultimately it's my decision.

Ms. Sarauer: — As per the legislation.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That's right.

Ms. Sarauer: — Swift Current, Meadow Lake, Estevan, and other rural courthouses have one judge as well. Should these communities also be concerned about their courthouses closing?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There's no ongoing current conversation with respect to these matters. Of course they're always conversations that we're prepared to have with the Chief Judge, but there's really been no conversations with respect to the closure of any other court points at this point.

Ms. Sarauer: — Did the ministry take into consideration the barriers to marginalized communities and the effect it would have with the ability to access justice when the ministry decided to close this particular court location?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I'll ask Glennis Bihun to answer the question.

Ms. Bihun: — Glennis Bihun. So I think it's important to emphasize that the services remain available in the Lloydminster community for the court appearances. It continues to operate with the same schedule that it did prior to the closure of the office in Lloydminster.

And so while there's been some changes with other appearances

occurring out of Lloydminster — for example, I mean like where there's been those appearances occurring out of Lloydminster because of safety concerns in the current facility — the ministry has been working with the Chief Judge to identify a different facility and in fact has recently done so and are working on a plan so that court can recommence in the Onion Lake community in the coming months. And I'd estimate that to be six to eight months or so.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Just on Onion Lake, I thought Onion Lake had a dedicated facility for court, circuit court. Could you provide some more information about the concerns around safety?

Ms. Bihun: — Yeah, there's been a number of safety concerns that came to light, certainly the detention area and the ability to safely secure prisoners in that facility, along with really overcrowding. That's not necessarily associated with physical distancing and the pandemic, but really providing anyone who attended that circuit court to be able to, particularly the public . . . Without having some sort of overflow space, the facility just wasn't a sufficient size for the public to have access.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. And you've said conversations are ongoing with the community and the chief with respect to that. And so what is the plan for the future of having a court point in Onion Lake?

Ms. Bihun: — Yeah, so we're just confirming with our colleagues at SaskBuilds and Procurement to work with a new lease arrangement which would be part of the Justice building. I don't have the square footage, but it would in essence double the space. So there would be opportunity for a secure detention area, secure pathways for prisoners, as well as about double the courtroom size.

Ms. Sarauer: — As you can imagine and you saw in the media, Minister, the legal community in the area were quite upset over this change. Could you explain why the Battleford Bar Association was not consulted or aware of this decision prior to it being made?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There wasn't any consultation, just notification.

Ms. Sarauer: — Could you explain why?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — The decision was made on the recommendation of the Chief Justice. And we rely on the Chief Justice to provide us with the information that is needed to make these important decisions so we ensure that there's a proper and efficient delivery of judicial services in that community. That's why the decision was made, but the decision was made in consultation with the Chief Judge.

Ms. Sarauer: — Were the court staff at Lloydminster offered positions in North Battleford or transferred to other locations?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Yeah, two staff members had the option to transfer to the North Battleford office, three positions were ended, and four term positions were ended early. And of course all the staff was able to access the EFAP [employee family assistance program] program for employees and the family

assistance.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Being cognizant of the time, I'm hoping to get a bit more information on a few different things, so I'm going to try and move a little bit quickly. You mentioned, Minister, there is a major case assistance unit being established for prosecutions branch in this budget. Could you provide some further information about that?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Sure. Essentially what we've done is we've established this major case assistance unit to kind of deal with major cases, to put some senior, seasoned prosecutors in place to deal with those. The budget includes \$1.405 million in 12 FTEs [full-time equivalent] in public prosecutions to establish that unit. And in addition to that, I think I mentioned in my opening comments the decision to augment prosecutorial services by using agents. So that's the purpose of putting that unit in place.

I think I mentioned in my opening comments the significant number of major cases that are in Saskatchewan. We certainly want to have those dealt with in a timely way to avoid some of the consequences for not dealing with them in a timely way. And so that was the purpose of putting it together, to make sure that we get cases to trial as quickly as we can. Of course, that not only serves the ends of justice but certainly serves the victims who are the victims of those, to get those dealt with as quickly as we can. So that's the purpose.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Was this a pressure point being experienced by the prosecutions office and a recommendation that came out of that office?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Perhaps I'll have Assistant Deputy Minister Gerein just make a comment.

Mr. Gerein: — Good afternoon. Anthony Gerein, assistant deputy attorney general, public prosecutions. And I can't resist reminding everyone what day this is, and I am a lawyer.

So this is something that's evolved a little bit over time, because what we have seen — as I think many other professions have seen, as I think many other walks of life have seen — there's been a bit of a shift. We have experience that retires. We have experience that is appointed to the bench. We have experience that moves to take on other jobs and other obligations without much of a transition and without a chance to pass on the experience that normally would be passed on.

With that as well, the people we're recruiting are tending to have less criminal experience than before. Even if they have other legal experience, they're not practised in the areas we deal with. Add to that one more consideration: you don't start out as a prosecutor prosecuting murders or attempted murders. That takes some years to develop skills, and we have a system in place — we've had it for a very long time — relying largely on mentorship. That is not always the easiest thing to do because of the geography of the province, and it's been made more difficult because of the pandemic.

So a fundamental thought behind this initiative is to take exceedingly experienced and capable prosecutors who are already in place and not only let them focus on the cases that need attention but also free up some of their time that would now be

spent on, I won't call them lesser cases, I'll call them other cases that don't have the same complexity or require some of the same experience, and enable them to more freely work with juniors, make them available for consultation where we can't have two prosecutors working together perhaps because of geography, and bring their expertise to bear, and also, we hope, do some work with the police, not telling the police what to do — they know their job just fine — but giving some insight into what's needed to properly proceed with a case in court so that we can determine, is that evidence there? Is that evidence sound? Is it all Charter-compliant? Because of course if we shouldn't go ahead, the sooner we know that the better as well.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. So this is about increasing capacity, allowing some more senior prosecutors to focus on more complex files while at the same time being able to provide the mentorship that is needed and the like. Am I getting the gist of it?

Mr. Gerein: — I would agree with that. Depending what you and I take "capacity" to mean, it might be a little different. We don't envision this changing the number of court dates. We don't envision this as calling on or calling for more court appearances or running more cases in parallel. It's more a matter of focusing the expertise and, as fast as we can, passing on those skills, passing on that experience to more people, because we have a lot of relatively junior prosecutors.

And mentorship alone in the existing system without this unit sort of overarching and able to focus is going to make it harder to do that quick enough. Because we want to get to the point, it's always been the philosophy that any prosecutor should be able to take on any case, because of course you never know where you're going to need somebody and when and with the geography we have. So that's what we're trying to do is augment what we have to make it better.

Ms. Sarauer: — Have there been corresponding pressures faced by Legal Aid as well? I'm just wondering about the flip side of the files and how that's being addressed. Thank you, Mr. Gerein.

Ms. Head: — Kylie Head, assistant deputy attorney general with the Ministry of Justice. So Legal Aid is not able to be here with us today. They were struck down by COVID this morning. So the option is, I can go into the hallway and have a conversation with them and then come back and tell you the results, which will take some time. Or I understand you're meeting with the CEO [chief executive officer] very soon, and you might want to just talk to her directly. It's your option.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah, you busted me. I will be meeting later. And I do respect that but do not necessarily want you to go step out and make those calls. So I will move on to some other questions that I have. Thank you anyways though. I appreciate that.

[17:00]

Police oversight. Now you, Minister, spoke a bit about funding for SIRT. I thought this would be under Corrections and Policing, but is this under Justice?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — The Public Complaints Commission where

SIRT will be established is the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice.

Ms. Sarauer: — Right. Let's talk police oversight and the new SIRT team. Could you provide an update on how that work is going?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Sure, I'll provide a little bit of opening commentary on this. The office has been established. We have an executive director that's in place. Now I understand that they have been successful in retaining their first investigator and they continue to work to retain their second investigator, which is part of the planning for the initial funding. And so that's the current status of where things are at in terms of the establishment of the unit.

Ms. Sarauer: — Have Indigenous organizations now been consulted on the establishment of the unit?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — They certainly have, yeah. As a matter of fact the FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] has been integral in the conversations.

Ms. Sarauer: — That was my next question, was which Indigenous organizations? Do you have that list or is the FSIN the organization?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — There's a number of organizations and I'll have assistant deputy minister Turner speak to that.

Ms. Turner: — Hi. With respect to your question on which consultations, we've met with some of the chiefs in the Indian Justice Commission. We have met with, of course, their special investigations unit. We've also met with all of the justice directors in the tribal councils in the communities that run the current justice programs. And we've had occasion also to speak with some of the urban service providers in the province. We're not done that consultation yet. It's still ongoing and it will be for some time. They're partners in this work.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. When is the SIRT planning on being operational?

Ms. Turner: — You'll recall that there was funding originally in this past fiscal year to help them establish an office. As the minister has said, we've been successful in hiring a very skilled executive director for the unit. We have our first investigator. The competition for the second one has just closed and we're bringing more staff on.

We've been building the office. There's a lot of moving pieces that we could talk about that. It's essential that we have that team in place to be able to start taking those cases, so we're hopeful that the most recent competition will yield some good candidates and people to come on. We don't have a firm date because of that. It's very incumbent on having the investigators in place.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I should just point out that the difficulty in finding the seasoned investigators that we do need is not just a problem in Saskatchewan. Certainly across the country, other organizations that do this kind of investigative work are having the same challenges. But it's very important that we get the right people in place before the formal launch.

Ms. Sarauer: — How many investigators does the office plan on having?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Three to begin with.

Ms. Sarauer: — And have there been . . . It sounds like, but correct me if I'm wrong, that there have already been some job competitions that have gone out that haven't yielded successful results. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That's right. I mean one has been retained so far. And it's not that the applicants aren't, you know, talented investigators. It's just that we're looking for people with special investigative talents, right? And so certainly there's been a number of people that have applied, very good people that have applied, that have significant resumés. We're looking for specific talents and that's what's causing a little bit of the difficulty. And again that's one of the challenges that other organizations across the country are facing.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Thank you. I would love to ask more questions on this but I should move on, being cognizant of the time, and would like to ask specifically about the \$2.7 million investment in the e-justice initiative that's in this budget cycle. And if the ministry could provide some more details as to what that funding is for, that would be appreciated.

Ms. Williams: — Shannon Williams, again assistant deputy attorney general for the justice services division. So the e-justice project, as you indicated, has received funding to get two projects essentially under way.

The first project that the justice initiative is working on is the provincial offences project. That project has been the first project that we undertook. It began some time ago, and the intention of that e-justice project is just to make the system simpler for citizens to resolve certain traffic tickets, either through an online system or also still in person. The system will provide users with free legal information to ensure that they understand their legal rights and their duties, and assist them in determining the likely merits of their case and whether it makes sense for them to proceed to court.

It's anticipated to help reduce the strain of these types of offences that they currently place on the courts. As you can imagine, there's many, many traffic tickets that go through our justice system, and many individuals are impacted by this. And so it does have a significant strain on our system. The online process is to make that system simpler, more effective, more efficient for individuals to use that system, and it gives them another option. So it's not the only option, but it will provide them with another option that hopefully will be simpler for them to access.

The funding that has come into that has been really to begin this process, to do the foundation to develop the network, I guess, that needs to be created in order for this online process to begin. So that's initially what that funding was spent . . . In the 2020-2021 budget there was \$155,000 spent. In the 2021-22 budget there was 3.408 million spent. And in 2022-23 the forecast is for \$4.074 million for the budget for the entire e-justice program.

Ms. Sarauer: — What stage are you at on this project at this point?

Ms. Williams: — So right now the provincial offences project entered into the execution phase as of March of 2021. And to date, so as of January 31st, 2022, they indicated that that project had spent approximately 1.57 million. So we're in the execution phase right now. We're continuing to test and release the functionality of this project over the next little while.

In the initial phase — it will phased through for the provincial offences project — the initial phase will be red light camera tickets, and we're targeting that to be the initial phase in winter of 2022; moving into a second phase after that, which will be photo speed enforcement targeting February, March of 2023. And then the third phase will be the remainder of in-scope offence tickets to come out under *The Traffic Safety Act* and *The Vehicle Equipment Regulations* and *The Commercial Vehicles Hours of Service Regulations*, and we're targeting that to be rolled out in June of 2023 or in the summer of 2023.

Ms. Sarauer: — So the plan is to phase out the access to this project. And it's not accessible to the public at this point, but it will be shortly?

Ms. Williams: — That's right, exactly. Yes. Sorry, my colleagues just wanted to be sure that it was clear that the provincial offences is a project, but the e-justice is a program that will be ongoing over time, so it won't end with provincial offences. Provincial offences is our first project in the e-justice program.

Our second project will be the Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority, and that's under way already, but not as far along at this point as the provincial offences project. And then other projects will come on board as we develop, as we collaborate and come up with newish, new projects that other people may be interested in bringing onto this program.

Ms. Sarauer: — Are there other projects already in the works once the two projects that you've mentioned are complete?

Ms. Williams: — Currently the SCAA [Safe Community Action Alliance] project is the only other project that's currently in the works, as you say. We don't have anything else yet lined up, but there's certainly, you know, communications happening with other places to get interest and to gauge interest in it.

Ms. Sarauer: — Does the ministry have an idea of where they want to go next on this project? Or on e-justice services as a whole, I mean — the program, not the project.

Ms. Williams: — I think we have lots of thoughts about it and there's lots of communication happening, but we just haven't gone. We don't have anything concrete yet that we would be able to really talk about. I think it's just, there's lots of comments and lots of communication happening, and just interest in looking at where we may be able to take this program.

Ultimately the idea is to develop a program that's going to make justice more accessible to the citizens of Saskatchewan in ways, and it's really a transformative program. So it's looking not just at taking current systems and putting them online. It's looking at how we can transform systems to make them really more accessible and meaningful to citizens and have impact.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Things like tribunals, for instance, right? Small claims, those kinds of things would be attractive, I think, programs to move forward with as far as the initiative's concerned, and always kind of thinking about where we can go with this. But those are the initial programs, anyway. And I know the ministry's been working very, very hard on it.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. I'm wondering. I ask this every year about the number of Gladue reports that have been written over the previous year. I understand the ministry's position on it being included as a part of pre-sentence reports, but I would like to know specifically: Gladue reports — how many were created in the past year?

I'll just keep talking for a few minutes. I understand there are a few different organizations who are now doing Gladue reports and have Gladue writers. So I'm cognizant of the time, going to segue into my second question as well, which is whether the ministry has any indication of whether or not in the future they will centralize this work like other provinces do, rather than having it as it exists now in Saskatchewan where, you know, several different CBOs are trying to fill in this gap.

Ms. Turner: — Jan Turner. Thank you for your questions. So I'm going to start with your first question, was how many Gladue reports. And I'm going to rephrase it slightly to say how many were funded by the ministry in the past year. In this past year, there were none that were funded by the ministry.

Rather, working with our partners in community corrections — our Crown prosecutor partners, Legal Aid — we've had a preference in the province to beef up the pre-sentence reports that are received in the court, and they have served the needs of the court in providing the Gladue factors.

That doesn't mean that there aren't other agencies that have, as you've indicated, been doing Gladue reports and submitting them to the court, but those are not funded by the ministry. The ministry, of course, is very interested in the work that goes on across the country — the dialogue, the discussion about Gladue — as are the courts. And the courts take note of that as well.

I think the issue that we always look at is what is the best way to provide the best information to the court in those sentencing matters. And there's different vehicles and different ways that that can occur.

Ms. Sarauer: — I'd love to talk more on this topic. Unfortunately I understand from the Chair that I'm out of time, but I will take this opportunity to thank you, Minister, for answering my questions, as well as your deputy minister and all of the officials who joined with us this afternoon. Thank you so much for being here.

Like I said, it's such a pleasure to have you all back again. I'm so sorry for those who sat here for two hours and I wasn't able to get to your particular file to ask a question. But thank you for your work, not just today but every single day. I know the minister agrees. We very much appreciate the work that you do.

I'd also like to thank the Chair and the committee members, as well as Hansard and the committee staff. But I'll see them in 45 minutes, so I can thank them again when I have to spend the next

three hours with them.

[17:15]

The Chair: — Minister, if you've got a final comment?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thanks very much. Well first of all I just want to thank Ms. Sarauer for her very respectful questions, and to you, Chair, for running the meeting, the members of the committee who sat patiently by and listened to all the answers. I really also want to thank the officials who were here today. And Ms. Sarauer put it very, very well, that they . . . very, very thankful for the work that they do to support me each and every day. And they make me look good every day, so I'm very thankful to them. And I also want to thank Hansard for their attendance tonight.

The Chair: — All right, it's time for a recess. We'll adjourn consideration of these estimates, and I will thank . . . Well everybody else has been thanked, but thank you, Miranda, for being a part of this. And we'll see you in 45 minutes. Thanks, everyone.

[The committee recessed from 17:15 until 18:01.]

**General Revenue Fund
Corrections, Policing and Public Safety
Vote 73**

Subvote (CP01)

The Chair: — All right. Welcome back, committee members. And we'll begin our consideration of vote 31, Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, subvote (CP01), central management and services. Minister Tell, you're here with your officials. And as a reminder to officials, please state your name for the record before you speak. Please don't touch the microphones. It's kind of a rule. The Hansard operator will turn your microphone on when you speak. And, Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Okay, I will. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've got a . . . as you can see behind me, so this is going to take just a few minutes. I have Dale Larsen beside me, deputy minister; Rob Cameron — I know where these people are; once it gets back into the other ones I'm not exactly sure — Rob Cameron, assistant deputy minister; Heather Sriver, assistant deputy minister of custody services; Joelle Aldridge, director, major projects; Rae Gallivan, executive director of police contracts and financial services; Caroline Graves, executive director, community corrections; Cory Lerat, executive director, First Nations and Indigenous policing; Mark McFadyen, executive director, custody services; Noel McAvena, executive director, provincial disaster assistance program; Jeff Rowden, executive director of provincial protective services branch; Jill Rowden, the executive assistant, Corrections, Policing and Public Safety; and we have Merv Morin, director of First Nations and Indigenous policing.

From the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, we have Marlo Pritchard, president; Teresa Florizone, vice-president, corporate services; Michelle Broda, executive director, finance and corporate services; and Chris Clemett, executive director, enterprise projects and external relations.

From the Firearms Secretariat, we have the one and only Robert Freberg, the Chief Firearms Officer. So he's here by himself joining the rest of us.

Integrated justice, Drew Wilby, assistant deputy minister; Mindy Gudmundson, executive director, strategic portfolio and fiscal planning; Noel Busse, executive director, communications branch; Monica Field, executive director, strategic systems and innovation; and Aaron Orban, executive director, access and privacy branch.

Did you get all that?

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah, oh yeah.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Excellent, excellent. Okay. All right. What we're going to do, Mr. Chair, if it's okay with you, is that we'll have whoever is responsible and is going to be speaking to a particular item, they're just going to come up here and speak in there instead of going up to the podium, if that's okay with you. All right.

The Chair: — That works.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Good evening, everyone. I'm pleased to be here to discuss the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety's 2022-23 financial plan and to answer any questions. I'm joined at the table by Dale Larsen, and of course I've introduced everybody before. We have a number of officials from the ministry, Firearms Secretariat, and the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency.

Our goals of providing safe communities, safe facilities, and safe and engaged employees takes a team far greater than what can be represented in this room. I want to recognize and thank all of our front-line staff for the tremendous work they have done throughout a very challenging year or years. They have served Saskatchewan citizens through their expertise, integrity, dedication to do what they do, and we are very grateful for their service.

This budget aligns with our government's goal of protecting our province. This year the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety's budget has increased to 602 million, an increase of 39 million, or approximately 6.8 per cent. Custody, supervision, and rehabilitation services has increased by approximately \$4 million from last year to over 1.98 million this year. Policing and community safety services has increased by nearly \$32 million to \$304 million this year. Public safety, including the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency's budget, has increased by 2.5 million to nearly 98 million.

We'll now highlight some areas of importance in this year's budget. Nearly 1.5 million in new funding will be devoted to the Saskatchewan crime suppression strategy — easy for me to say — including the development of the provincial protective services branch.

The province has made solid progress in decreasing provincial crime severity and overall crime rates over the last decade. Property crime is down by 12 per cent this year. However in the last five years, the province has seen a rise in organized street gangs, which has led to more illegal guns, drugs, and human

trafficking coming into our province. We will expand the crime reduction team, as they have proven to be a useful tool in helping address immediate public safety concerns that communities are experiencing. There are now nine teams: the RCMP teams in North Battleford, Prince Albert, Lloydminster, Moose Jaw, La Ronge, and Meadow Lake; and municipal police service teams in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert.

Suppression of crime is heavily reliant on the collection and timely distribution of criminal intelligence. Criminal analysts are attached to each crime reduction team and share intelligence with other crime reduction teams in the province. We've also created a warrant enforcement and suppression team, otherwise known as WEST. The team is based in Saskatoon and Meadow Lake and works jointly with RCMP and municipal policing services.

WEST is designed to target high-profile offenders and gang members with outstanding warrants. These offenders have capacity to conduct, commit additional crimes while in the community, which impacts our public safety. Warrant enforcement is the primary focus of this team, and it is deployable around the province.

Saskatchewan trafficking response team, otherwise known as STRT, will also receive funding in this budget. STRT will work on the enforcement and development of criminal intelligence specific to drugs, illegal weapons, and human trafficking. Four offices will be strategically located in Lloydminster, Swift Current, Yorkton, and Estevan based on their proximity to provincial boundaries and established drug, firearm, and human trafficking corridors.

These highly mobile teams will be ready to deploy anywhere in the province. As Assistant Commissioner Rhonda Blackmore recently stated at SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], these are important units that will have a direct impact in helping make our communities safer.

We are also continuing to invest in the new remand centre build at Saskatoon Correctional Centre, with \$27 million going towards this build this year. This is a three-year project that will see the new building open in 2025. The increase in gang-affiliated and high-needs offenders has put strain on our existing infrastructure and requires us to invest in a new, modern build that will allow us to house this population safely and securely.

Urban Camp replacement at Saskatoon Correctional Centre is also an integral part of this investment. Urban Camp provides low-risk offenders the opportunity to work and reintegrate back into our communities. The investment of 5.894 million will ensure Urban Camp is able to continue operating and providing those opportunities for reintegration.

This year also sees continued funding for the gang-violence reduction strategy which has a number of components. Saskatchewan integrated intelligence group brings together intelligence and resources across agencies to ensure that intelligence about gang-affiliated individuals is being shared.

The drug and substance abuse treatment units are specialized partnerships with health professionals that are designed to address addictions issues and provide appropriate supports — it is referred to as DSATU [dedicated substance abuse treatment

unit] — are now operational in Regina correctional centre, Prince Albert, Pine Grove, and one more unit will open in Saskatoon Correctional Centre this year.

Community intervention model is being led by community-based partners in Saskatoon and Regina. To date, 273 individuals have been referred to the community intervention model, or CIM program, since its inception in January of 2020. Currently there are 119 clients actively participating in programming across the province. Provincially funded, independent evaluation is being conducted by the University of Saskatchewan to determine the success of these programs in addressing gang activity and related issues in the province.

The Firearms Secretariat will be resourced with a budget of over 2.5 million. A major part of the secretariat's work going forward will be to increase awareness around firearm safety. This includes responsible firearm storage, ensuring the safety of licensed ranges, and reacting effectively and promptly to public safety concerns involving firearms.

This year we will provide 15.108 million in additional funding to the RCMP to support important initiatives such as the First Nations policing program. This funding will also provide for contractual increases to the RCMP.

The '22-23 budget sees continued investment in the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency that is responsible for protecting people, property, and resources. Focusing on the four pillars of emergency management — mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery — the agency works with communities to help them identify the risks and take actions to manage these risks.

It also responds when an event occurs, most commonly wildfire, flooding, but also large-scale and province-wide emergencies. The agency's situational awareness team continues to monitor risks to the province, disseminate intelligence to other ministerial agencies and Crown corporations. The SPSA [Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency] actively shares information with stakeholders and partners like municipalities, First Nations, and first responders. It doubled up these efforts during the pandemic.

As the province learns to live with COVID, the SPSA continues to provide rapid antigen test kits to over 600 locations across the province and remains ready to respond as required to any future needs.

2021 response season was especially busy for the agency as the province saw over 630 wildfires, more than double our five-year average. Flooding remains a concern — especially in light of what we're going to see here overnight and going forward — depending on runoff, while drought and grass fires are a concern due to dry conditions in southern areas of the province.

SPSA is working with communities and other agencies to mitigate risk and coordinate support for those that may be impacted. The agency's strength comes from working together to improve information flow and decision making during such emergencies which provides a more streamlined provincial response. Highly trained staff achieve this by utilizing the proven incident command system which enhances interagency coordination and joint efforts.

[18:15]

SPSA's '22-23 expense budget is 94.903 million compared to 92.373 million in '21-22. This is an increase, doing the math, of \$2.5 million compared to last year. SPSA GRF [General Revenue Fund] operating grant is 76.792 million, an increase of 2.233 million due to the following increases: 200,000 increase for emergency preparedness in fire safety public education; \$100,000 increase for First Nations and community evacuation planning; 196,000 for disaster mitigation adaptation fund projects; 1.937 million increase for centralized costs and supports related to IT, accommodations, and collective bargaining agreement salary adjustments. And 200,000 decrease for visual identity such as uniforms, vehicles, and signage.

The Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety plays a vital role in our province. We have accomplished much this last year and will continue to work with our partners and the wider community to create positive outcomes for the people of Saskatchewan.

Now I would be pleased to answer your questions about the '22-23 plan and budget for the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety and its associated entities. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister. Ms. Sarauer, any opening comments, and then the floor is yours.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for your opening comments. I'd like to join you in welcoming your officials here this evening. I said this this afternoon and I'll say it again for the folks who weren't here — most of you folks weren't here — last year's estimates, while it was nice, it was not nearly the same as it has been in the past. And it was really sad that officials weren't able to be here for the past two years in the capacity that we have grown accustomed. I really enjoy the opportunity to speak with all of your officials, Minister, and hear about the work that they're doing.

So I just want to express my gratitude for all of you for being here this evening, and I'm just really happy that we're able to resume estimates in the way that we have previous to the past two years. I'm looking forward to the two and some now — over 2.6 — hours of conversation that we'll be having this evening.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Before you start, though . . .

Ms. Sarauer: — Yes.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The officials appreciate it, and so do we, but what we really want you to do is name all of them.

The Chair: — Hang on here. Hang on, Minister. This is apparently lawyer appreciation day, so if there's lawyers in the room I'm terribly sorry. Your day is over at 5 o'clock.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — It's done.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah, the Minister of Justice indicated to us in his estimates that it's Be Kind to Lawyers Day today, so we're hoping that, you know, the members of the committee who are lawyers will, yeah, will benefit from that.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yeah, we've got a few.

Ms. Sarauer: — Minister, I'm going to start with a question that I asked the Minister of Justice this afternoon.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Sure.

Ms. Sarauer: — And he indicated that this was actually more through the Ministry of Corrections and that I should direct my question to you. There, as you recall, after the death of Kimberly Squirrel — who, after she left, as you know, left Pine Grove, passed away — there was a, from what I understand, an internal investigation and recommendations that flowed out of it between both, well I thought both Corrections and Justice.

Justice informs me that it's mostly Corrections, so I'm wondering if you could provide me, Minister, with what the outcome of that investigation was and what were the recommendations as a result.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — What is this supposed to look like? Oh, don't touch it. So the words "don't touch it" mean nothing to me. I thought I had to.

The Chair: — Minister, I just said that about the officials. You're . . . touch away.

A Member: — The rules apply to you, too.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yeah. Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm not listening to him.

So yes, and of course I'm going to have Heather Scriver come up. She was intimately familiar with this particular dreadful incident, and . . . But first off, I must say our deepest condolences to Kimberly Squirrel's family and her loved ones, and we're hopeful that . . . that we hope that we won't see this type of thing again.

But anyway, Heather Scriver, ADM [assistant deputy minister] of custody services. Yeah. Okay, she's going to take over.

Ms. Sarauer: — You should have to name and label all your officials.

Ms. Scriver: — Good afternoon. I'm Heather Scriver. So in regards to Kimberly Squirrel — and as Minister Tell indicated, condolences to the family — and this provides an opportunity for us to dispel some of the myths that were out there surrounding the situation with Kimberly.

The investigation into Pine Grove Correctional Centre handling of Ms. Squirrel's release was completed in November. It found that staff ensured her safety and well-being through the release process, and that Ms. Squirrel had safe transportation to Saskatoon as well as appropriate clothing for the weather upon her release.

The investigation also found that Crown counsel and defence counsel followed established practices. Ms. Squirrel provided the address to where she was ordered to reside, indicating it was a home of a relative. Prosecutions and Legal Aid staff made steps to confirm the address provided by the offender for their release

conditions, depending on the circumstances. The Crown saw no cause for concern about the address provided by Ms. Squirrel.

The Saskatchewan Coroners Service was in contact with Ms. Squirrel's family throughout the coroner's investigation. The Coroners Service remained available to respond to any questions and to provide clarification to the family on the cause and manner of death.

Investigative reports are considered confidential. There are a number of privacy and security issues that must be taken into account when conducting an investigation, including sensitive information about the individuals involved. There were no recommendations made in the report.

Ministry officials met with members of Ms. Squirrel's family earlier this year. Out of respect for Ms. Squirrel's family, we will not be providing any additional details about what was discussed during that meeting.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Let's speak a bit about the release process that you mentioned. So what steps are taken by those at Corrections when an inmate is released?

Ms. Scriver: — Mark McFadyen, executive director of custody and services, will provide the response.

Mr. McFadyen: — Don't touch, right?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Don't touch.

Mr. McFadyen: — Right. Hi. Good evening. In regards to Ms. Squirrel, once again our condolences go out to the family. So in regards to the release of Ms. Squirrel, and without getting into, you know, too great of specifics, the order of her release is not defined or developed by Corrections. That was done in the courts with the lawyers. So we abide by the release order that we received on her, and that was all done through video court.

So upon release for the individual she was afforded the telephone, which she took advantage of. She was prepared for release; transportation was arranged. Staff ensured that she had her property, and as ADM Scriver suggested, that she was released with appropriate clothing both on her person and in her belongings. She was taken to a paid transportation services that was paid for by Corrections and took the transportation to Saskatoon.

Now post that, we don't have information, and that might be questions that would be better served maybe for the police or somebody else. But appropriate release protocols for Ms. Squirrel, and any other offender that was released, were followed. And I would say that in this case in particular, staff went above and beyond in ensuring that Ms. Squirrel was prepared appropriately for release and released safely, at least while she was in our care.

Ms. Sarauer: — What are generally speaking — not just specific to Ms. Squirrel's instance — but generally speaking, what are the release protocols?

Mr. McFadyen: — Well for a video court release, which typically we'll have two types of release. If someone's released

from court or video court, they will be provided transportation if required. Typically our policy speaks to that we try to have the offender be responsible for their own release plans. Sometimes it's difficult when it's such short notice type of release. So ensure appropriate transportation is provided; that they're provided appropriate clothing upon release — given the weather conditions, we have items in stock should they require them if they don't have it in their personal property; access to telephone to arrange either for transportation on their own or residence upon discharge. And like I said in this case specific, those were all done through the court, not through Corrections.

Ms. Sarauer: — You mentioned that Corrections has items in stock that they can be provided to inmates when they're released. Can you describe what those are?

Mr. McFadyen: — Yeah. Most of those items would be more for winter wear. We have jackets that we have that we would provide to an offender who didn't have appropriate winter-weather clothing to be released on. And we would also release them, if they didn't have appropriate shoes, we would release them with shoes, institutional shoes that we would have. But we wouldn't open the door in inclement weather and say, there you go.

Ms. Sarauer: — One of the challenges that float out of the conversation that resulted from Ms. Squirrel's death was around the gap in connecting those flowing through the correctional system and Social Services. Did the ministry in their review look at that at all as a potential recommendation?

Mr. McFadyen: — There were no recommendations.

Ms. Sarauer: — Has the ministry looked into the gap between offenders leaving facilities and being able to connect to social assistance?

Mr. McFadyen: — So if we're not speaking specifically to the Squirrel file — which obviously to answer this appropriately, we're not — just through the general case management process of an offender and planning for the release, if there's the requirement or the need to bring Social Services in, whether it be for funding upon release or other agencies, even outside of Social Services, whether it be for obtaining identification, etc., those would be done through the whole case management process and the reintegration process. We have reintegration officers in our facilities, dedicated in the facilities. that would also assist in the reintegration of an offender in making sure that, to the best of their ability and the best of the resources that are available, that they can connect offenders for certain resources on the release.

Ms. Sarauer: — How many dedicated reintegration officers are there in facilities right now?

Mr. McFadyen: — So for the big four — Pine Grove Correctional Centre, P.A. [Prince Albert] Correctional Centre, Regina, and Saskatoon — there's one employed by us in each of the facilities. We've also recently developed partnerships with Saskatoon Tribal Council, specifically at least right now, in the Saskatoon region both for Saskatoon Correctional Centre, the reintegration units, and Urban Camp. They have some urban navigators, that they're titled, they all equally assist in, at least right now in Saskatoon, with that process for us as well too.

Ms. Scriver reminded me of one other partnership. We have a partnership contract with Elizabeth Fry, who help us significantly at Pine Grove equally with the same agenda: reintegration into the community. And they provide assistance in support networks in the community, transportation, linking individuals up with residents, things like that.

[18:30]

Ms. Sarauer: — So just to be clear, for P.A. and Regina, there is one reintegration officer who's tasked with doing reintegration planning for every offender in that facility?

Mr. McFadyen: — No. So as much as they're the reintegration officer for that facility, it's the responsibility of the caseworkers who work with the offenders, in particular the sentenced offenders, for the reintegration planning. The reintegration officer is there to assist and take a key role in that, but it's not singularly their responsibility at all. They're there as a lead in the process, but it's definitely a case management process and a case management responsibility to prepare or assist an offender in preparing for their release if they're so obliging with the activity.

Ms. Sarauer: — When you say caseworkers, do you mean people who are separate from correctional officers? Or is that a role that the correctional officers do?

Mr. McFadyen: — It's a role of correctional officers. Depending on the correctional officer's role, if they're assigned to a sentenced unit, there's going to be more case management and more reintegration planning going on than maybe a remand unit where an individual's here today, gone tomorrow, this type of thing.

Ms. Sarauer: — Does the ministry have data on how often the reintegration officers are connecting offenders to social services?

Mr. McFadyen: — We don't have numbers specifically to reintegration officers connecting with social services. Sometimes it's phone calls that occur just at the unit level by a case manager, etc. We do have numbers on our reintegration leaves as far as offenders who are granted offender reintegration leaves. But we don't have . . . If you're talking about how many touch points occurred between Corrections and Social Services in the release of an offender, we don't have statistics to provide.

Ms. Sarauer: — Is that not tracked, or just not available right now?

Mr. McFadyen: — I think it'd be fair to say we don't track that.

Ms. Sarauer: — What about assisting offenders with being able to get ID [identification], for example?

Mr. McFadyen: — We do, yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — It can be a challenge.

Mr. McFadyen: — Yes. We will . . . what am I missing?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Oh, I touched the microphone again. Anyway, I think where you're going in this process, I think your questions may be more aptly answered by Drew Wilby in the Back To

Basics with respect to the remand. There's a lot of those types of answers to what you're asking for right now. It's really . . .

Ms. Sarauer: — Integrated.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yeah. Yeah, mm-hmm.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah, okay.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — So are you . . . I mean we can have Drew come up.

Ms. Sarauer: — I'm happy for an all-of-the-above approach with answering my questions, so whoever wants to . . .

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Okay. Okay, Mark. You did a great job, Mark.

Mr. McFadyen: — So we won't talk about ID, then?

Ms. Sarauer: — I think your minister has benched you.

The Chair: — Minister, he's not done.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Oh, do you want to first talk about ID and stuff?

Mr. McFadyen: — If you'd like me to.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yeah, you can. And then Drew will come up.

Mr. McFadyen: — Sure. Yes, we do help with ID if the offender so obliges. They can initiate the process too on their own; they don't need necessarily, you know, assist by everybody, but we do assist with ID especially with our offender employment coordinators that we have in our facilities, in particular again the big four. Part of their responsibility would be to assist individuals to get ID. So we do assist in that process, and offenders do obtain ID while they're incarcerated.

Ms. Sarauer: — Do you, before we get to Mr. . . .

Mr. McFadyen: — No, no, I don't.

Ms. Sarauer: — You don't? No data points on that, and that's not tracked at this time?

Mr. McFadyen: — Yeah, not that I'm aware of.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay, thanks. I don't know if Mr. Wilby wants to add to . . .

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Okay, Drew. Just don't touch the microphone.

Mr. McFadyen: — Done?

Ms. Sarauer: — I don't know. It's up to the minister.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thanks, Mark.

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, assistant deputy minister, community engagement. Thanks for the question, and I think what you've highlighted is a key part of what we've discovered in terms of the reintegration side. We know that, through our

work around remand, that we have a custody population that continues to cycle through our system, and what we're focusing on is those reduced returns to custody.

A lot of the issues that you put on the table there, and what Mark has talked about, are what we're seeing. And so it's why we moved forward on the Back to Basics program, and in particular with female offenders. I wouldn't say the situation around Ms. Squirrel specifically drove us there, but it was definitely a considering variable as we moved ahead.

What we've seen is a fairly significant jump in our female population since 2015, about a 240 per cent jump. And so we decided to wrap a program around them. We've put it out to a request for proposal and basically what it is, is to have CBO partners design the solution. Again, what I talked a little bit about earlier is that outcome-based process. Rather than us prescribing, you know, here's where we want the knife, the fork, the spoon, the plate, the cup on the table, we'll come back and see that the table's set and measure those outcomes. And that's things like driver's licences, things like connection to social assistance. Pieces like connection to education, housing, and all of those.

And starting small. We know it's a bite-size chunk approach. We can't boil the ocean or solve all these problems overnight, but starting small and starting to put those pieces together, but in particular using the expertise of our CBOs to do it. Out of that, we're hoping to have some of those metrics that you've talked about. You know, how many individuals have we connected to service? In particular, what service? Where do those gaps continue to be? So we're starting down that journey. It's going to be a bit of a road to get there, but we're hopeful that the program will be up and running by the fall, if not early winter.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay, so the program's not operational yet?

Mr. Wilby: — No, we just . . . The RFP [request for proposal] closed last week. So we had received, I believe — not telling stories out of school — we received seven responses. I can't say who they are, but we're hopeful. It's a fairly complex group of individuals there that have provided a response to that. So we're hoping to evaluate that in fairly short order and then further let a contract out for that and run it as a pilot to see how it goes. It's about a million dollars, so it's good money.

Ms. Sarauer: — I've heard from CBOs who are very interested in that project. It's hard to talk about it, because it's not quite operational yet, so I'm trying to think of useful questions that will help further this conversation.

When speaking with . . . You're talking specifically about female offenders. When I speak with those in policing, in particular they talk about how the drug crisis is leading to that increase specifically in the female offender population. Will Back to Basics be addressing that issue as well?

Mr. Wilby: — I'll talk a bit about that and then maybe I'll have Heather weigh in on some of the pieces specific to facility and where we are there, the DSATU and other great work that's going on. The short answer is yes. You know, as we looked and we saw that spike in the female population, the first question is, well what's driving that, right? Why is that interesting? What's moving that up?

And you're right, drugs are a big piece of that. Especially meth on the streets around 2014-15 and the escalation of that. And so considering those pieces and how best to wrap support and service, again, I'll let Heather talk to what's going on in facility. But once individuals are out, further connecting them to those services and making sure — through whether it be the Saskatchewan Health Authority, CBO partners, maybe it is the Canadian Mental Health Association or others that are working through some of those pieces — and continuing to connect those offenders to that service and then work with them as we go along. We know it's going to be that continuous intervention that's going to be the only way to get them through that.

Ms. Sarauer: — Right. So DSATU is for sentenced offenders but Back to Basics is for remanded offenders? Or all offenders?

Mr. Wilby: — Leaving facility. So it could be applicable to remand. It could be applicable to sentenced.

Not to get too long in the data, but what we're seeing is there's a group that's coming in. They're getting remanded largely because of previous offences, so they're offending at a lower rate. They're ending up being remanded. They're going. They're going to court and they're getting time served. They're getting released. They're spending about 193 days a year with us.

Corrections can't do anything with that. When they're remanded, they're holding and trying to ensure community safety and move through. So it's other factors that are playing out to get those individuals there. And so wrapping service once they're out in the community where they're best addressed, and some of those CBO partners can provide it, that's where Back to Basics is focused.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. And so Back to Basics is essentially helping Corrections connect those leaving facilities with the supports that exist in the community. That's correct?

Mr. Wilby: — Correct. And using the community-based partners to do it rather than government to do it and hopefully reducing the remand share and the numbers coming back into facilities. We can reduce those returns to custody; in essence we've reduced our custody population.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. So specifically with respect to addictions treatment in the community, what sort of programs, organizations would the successful RFP proponent for Back to Basics be able to refer leaving offenders to?

Mr. Wilby: — Part of that would be in conjunction with our partners in Health. We're happy that there's \$200,000 as part of Back to Basics that's come from the mental health and addictions area of Health. And so both the ministry and the Saskatchewan Health Authority are committed to working with us and whoever that CBO partner is. It will depend a little bit where they're released to. I mean if it's Saskatoon, Regina, P.A., there's more services than say, Black Lake. But we need to work that through and again rely on those CBO partners to figure some of that out.

That was what I would call — I'll choose my word carefully — but the beauty of the RFP is, you know, design it and figure out what that looks like. Similar to what we talked to with FIRST earlier today, you know, kind of connecting those pieces that are

out there in the specific communities. But again we would rely on our partners in Health to work through some of that with us, but we do have \$200,000 in funding from them.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Before we get to DSATU, this program is specific for Pine Grove. Is there a . . . Am I wrong on that? Or is there a plan to expand . . . I'm just wondering if this will be province-wide or if it's going to be looking at a specific area and then the hopes of expanding if it's successful? I'm just wondering what the growth of the program will be.

Mr. Wilby: — No, absolutely. Good question. It's a pilot specific to Pine Grove, potentially to White Birch. I wouldn't think so as much because there's not the population there to deal with, and that's more sort of the remand share and then up. If successful, and we're hopeful it is, with everything we do we build an evaluation onto it rather than just saying okay, let's continue on; let's see if it actually is doing what we want it to do.

And again, if the CBO thinks it's working. With lessons we learned from CAR [community alternatives to remand] is that CAR wasn't working for the CBO partners. It wasn't working to what they had expected, and so they wanted more ability to be flexible. If successful, hopefully we can move into the men's facilities as well. But we have to start somewhere, and we think the females are a very captive audience because of how susceptible they are to changes in the system.

Ms. Sarauer: — And just so that I understand, I'm assuming CAR means the previous remand strategy. But could you tell me what that means?

Mr. Wilby: — Sorry. That was the community alternatives to remand . . .

Ms. Sarauer: — Yes, okay. So the previous . . .

Mr. Wilby: — Program as part of the previous piece. So this is repositioning some of that money into Back to Basics.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah. The previous remand strategy.

Mr. Wilby: — Correct.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yes, I was hearing that challenge from CBOs as well. This funding, is it . . . The successful RFP proponent, is it for a certain amount of years, this funding? Or is it just for this next budget year?

Mr. Wilby: — No, we have \$1.2 million per year for the next three years.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay.

Mr. Wilby: — So it's a three-year pilot. It would be silly to do it for one year.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah.

Mr. Wilby: — You know, it's likely not going to get up and running, so yeah. And then at the end we'll evaluate.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay, thank you.

Mr. Wilby: — You betcha.

Ms. Sarauer: — Let's chat DSATU.

Ms. Scriver: — But just before we chat DSATU . . .

Ms. Sarauer: — Oh, sure.

Ms. Scriver: — I'm Heather Scriver. I just want to say that Back to Basics can also be recognized in our women's reintegration unit. You would know it as our community training residences in Saskatoon, too. So that's a population that it will involve as well.

So in regards to our dedicated substance abuse treatment unit, and Minister mentioned it in her opening comments, we do have . . . And they're called DSATU. In corrections everything is an acronym, right? So the DSATU is being implemented at Pine Grove Correctional Centre, or it has been implemented at Pine Grove Correctional Centre, Prince Albert Correctional Centre. It will be implemented at Saskatoon Correctional Centre, and it's been operational at the Regina correctional centre since 2008. The evaluation in 2008 has demonstrated that it is very successful in terms of reducing recidivism and contact with the criminal justice system.

[18:45]

So we do know that substance abuse is one of the contributing factors to offending, and research indicates that effective treatment for substance abuse reduces the likelihood of reoffending. The dedicated in-patient addictions unit at the Regina correctional centre has a capacity for 20 incarcerated offenders. Referrals are also accepted from other facilities in the province, but those are diminishing now that we have up-and-running units at the other men's facilities.

The program is five weeks long with structured programming running daily, Monday through Friday. The overall goals and outcomes for this initiative for offenders, families, and communities are reduced involvement or harm associated with alcohol and/or drugs, improved physical or psychological health, and family and/or social functioning. And again like I said earlier, it actually reduces involvement with the criminal justice system.

This evidence-based treatment program is based on best practices methodology as outlined by Canada Health; Corrections, Policing and Public Safety; the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse; and the Ministry of Health. The conceptual models used in DSATU are motivational interviewing, the transtheoretical model on behavioural change, and criminal lifestyles training.

The program consists of standardized and validated assessment tools for the evaluation of treatment suitability and motivation; pre-imposed evaluation tools to test the integrity of the program; a criminogenic risk-need analysis; treatment modalities that include cognitive behaviour therapy, relapse prevention, problem-solving skill development, goal-setting exercises, motivational interviewing, the transtheoretical model of behavioural change; and the process groups to facilitate self-reflection and internalization of new thinking and behaviour. And also there is after-care and post-treatment support. The offenders also participate in the cultural programming within the

facility, chaplaincy, and the life skills programming. And also that enhances their outcome for treatment.

The evaluation of the program demonstrated participants had a statistically significant lower rate of re-contact with Corrections at the 6-, 12-, and 20-month post-release dates. DSATU participants who come in contact with Corrections post-release took longer to have re-contact than the control group.

So the DSATU program has recently been reviewed and revised by Pine Grove by expert consultants, the Galvanizing Equity group. This revision has tailored the DSATU program to be more gender- and trauma-informed, specific for female offenders.

So just a little bit number of the breakdown since December 2021, because I know you're going to ask — I know, yeah — so at RCC [Regina correctional centre] the capacity is 20 participants per program cohort. And it's busy and we have a wait-list for the program. So right now the current wait-list at RCC is 121 offenders. So it's a very popular program. Since 2017 we started with 17 participants. They completed the program. Four had to be removed for various reasons. But fast-forward to 2021, we've had 78 participants complete at RCC alone.

Pine Grove, of course, it started November 2020. There's 11 participants per program cohort. There's no offenders right now on the waiting list. And we've had 54 participants at Pine Grove complete the program. So that's really exciting.

PACC [Prince Albert Correctional Centre], they have 13 participants per program cohort. And they have a current waiting list of 31 offenders. And they have 48 participants have completed. And of course, COVID impacted a little bit of our programming at the facility. So if we didn't have COVID, I know the numbers would higher.

Ms. Sarauer: — Sorry, that last number, was that P.A.?

Ms. Scriver: — Prince Albert Correctional Centre, yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — Do you have numbers for Saskatoon? Did I miss Saskatoon?

Ms. Scriver: — No, it hasn't opened.

Ms. Sarauer: — Hasn't opened yet. Gotcha. Okay, I was paying attention.

Ms. Scriver: — Yeah. And I just want to say that through federal funding for the GVRS, gang-violence reduction strategy, the DSATU program has been implemented just due to that, the funding that we got from the federal government.

Ms. Sarauer: — When will the Saskatoon unit be operational?

Ms. Scriver: — That will be dependent on the remand build at this point in time . . . I stand corrected. May. It will be operational in May.

Ms. Sarauer: — Do the units require additional staffing?

Ms. Scriver: — They're staffed by SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] staff, as well as our correctional officers. And they

have a staffing component that's a little bit more generous than the regular units in the facilities, yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — And the statistics you mentioned on the success of the Regina DSATU program, what year was that study done?

Ms. Scriver: — Of Regina?

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah, I think that's when you talked about how they're statistically significantly less likely to reoffend.

Ms. Scriver: — It was evaluated . . . I don't see in my notes when it was evaluated. It would have been probably five years out, right? It takes that long for the evaluation. I don't have that with me right now.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. We've talked about this many times in estimates, the success of the DSATU program. I'm really happy to see that it's expanding this fiscal and hopeful that it can help more offenders and result in less inmate population than we've been seeing in the past several years.

Ms. Scriver: — Agreed.

Ms. Sarauer: — It was just mentioned, and I know I was remiss last estimates because we ran out of time to talk about the remand centre. So let's talk about the remand centre. Where's construction at, is a good way to start, I think.

Ms. Aldridge: — Joelle Aldridge. So the question was where is construction at on the new remand centre build. And I'd say within the past 6 to 12 months, we're seeing some significant changes in market conditions related to construction pricing, materials pricing, supply chain volatility due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

And that's something that we're working with SaskBuilds, you know, in partnership with SaskBuilds and the delivery group on really taking a hard look at the design process in light of these new budgetary challenges that have come up as a result of the market volatility. So we are still in the design process, not necessarily into construction at the remand centre.

Ms. Sarauer: — Oh, I didn't realize we were still only at the design process of construction. So is the nature of the building changing in terms of number of beds? What pieces of the design are still under discussion, I suppose would be a better way of asking.

Ms. Aldridge: — We're currently just going through the value engineering process, and so through that value engineering process, investigating cost-saving strategies overall. I wouldn't say that I have a specific target or . . .

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. The money that was dedicated to this project last budget, what did it go to? And how much of it went where?

Ms. Aldridge: — So the budget for '21-22 was 51.887 million. We're projecting to spend almost 3.4 million of that over the past fiscal year, and that's, you know, essentially on design and pre-construction services. So that's the value engineering and design process that I've just referenced.

Ms. Sarauer: — So out of the 50-some million, about 3 million of that is being . . .

Ms. Aldridge: — 3.4.

Ms. Sarauer: — 3.4 was used last budget cycle.

Ms. Aldridge: — Yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — What happens to the remainder of that money? Is that waiting for when the construction process occurs, or did that go back to the GRF?

Ms. Aldridge: — Yeah. That goes back to GRF for the past fiscal year.

Ms. Sarauer: — What's the plan for the 27 million for this fiscal?

Ms. Aldridge: — So we're expecting design to continue of course and to enter into construction in the summer or fall potentially of this year. So we are expecting construction to begin in 2022-23 and that will start spending that budget allocation for the remand centre.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay.

Ms. Aldridge: — And I suppose the reason that we have this construction phased in such a way is because the Urban Camp project must proceed first, in that the existing Urban Camp has to be demolished and removed before that new build can go on that same site.

Ms. Sarauer: — And I thought the Urban Camp was going to be replaced last budget cycle. Was I wrong?

Ms. Aldridge: — So the Urban Camp project is under construction now.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay.

Ms. Aldridge: — And it's expected to be complete by March of 2023.

[19:00]

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. So was that delayed a year as well, or is this still on . . . Was this always the original, always the intended timeline for the Urban Camp replacement?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I cannot help myself. Yes, I touched it. Thank you so much. The questions surrounding timelines and building, and you know, construction progressing or not progressing needs to be addressed through SaskBuilds. I understand they're coming up for estimates, and perhaps that question can be best answered by them.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Can you answer any questions about . . . I understand that you're still going through the design phase of it, but there has been conversation about what the size of this building will be. Do we know at all what the building is going to look like in terms of how many inmates it will house and what those living quadrants will look like? Could you provide any

information about that?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Caught myself. You know it's a good day when . . . With respect to the number, the beds, and you know, how many offenders is this entity going to be able to house, with respect — and Joelle spoke about that — the higher cost of materials, the higher cost of everything, you know, we're just not . . . It's in evaluation now because of the higher cost. So if we put a project forward that we thought we wanted to have for a remand centre, with the higher inflationary costs we would be way over budget. So this is going on, and the reason why we are still in the design phase has to do with the higher costs.

Ms. Sarauer: — Right. No, I understand. Could you ballpark for me anticipated number of beds in this remand centre, understanding that it sounds like it's going to be smaller than what was originally anticipated?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Well as long as whatever number I give you, that we won't be held to it. I mean the thing is, with all of this is, it's changing. And I mean, we all know what's going on out there and that's caused us to step back and have a look at the entire design, the initial design and now a redesign. So anyway, I'll get you a ballpark, but it'll be so far off.

Ms. Sarauer: — I'm not sure what sort of power you think I have, Minister, but I assure you it's very little if none at all.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — It was initially announced by us that it would have offender capability of 427. So in light of the redesign, the design, inflationary costs, we cannot go over budget. So we're not sure specifically about where that is going to land.

Ms. Sarauer: — I'm honestly just curious . . .

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I know.

Ms. Sarauer: — More than anything.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Well we don't know that either yet. It was announced at 427. All I could say at this point in time, it's likely not going to be 427.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. I'm looking forward to hearing what the final design will look like.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Sorry.

Ms. Sarauer: — That's okay. Like I said, I'm just curious. I understand that there are pressures outside of government that are resulting in this project having to be looked at a second time. And I'm just looking forward to hearing what the final design will be. And perhaps we'll have this, I'm sure we'll have this discussion again . . .

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Oh, I'm sure. I'm sure we will.

Ms. Sarauer: — A year from now. Okay. Well I'll move on if you don't want to give me any more detail about the remand centre.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I just can't.

Ms. Sarauer: — Just to clarify, you did say in your opening remarks that you do anticipate still that it's going to open in 2025. Is that the plan?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Okay. Let's talk PPS [provincial protective services]. Could you provide some information about the provincial protective services branch, why that's being created and this \$1.5 million for the Sask crime suppression strategy? Is that all for PPS, or is that for other things as well?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Okay. Here we go with PPS.

The PPS will allow for greater coordination of our various peace officers and special constables by placing them under a single command structure. When there were barricades in the park earlier this year, they were staffed by various provincial peace officers. So that included Highway Patrol, conservation officers, SCAN [safer communities and neighbourhoods] officers, and the PCC [Provincial Capital Commission] community safety officers, alongside Regina Police Service.

This was only able to be coordinated because of the work that is under way and has been under way to create the PPS. So long and short of it is that we're able to access resources, where we can reliably access resources. The PPS will allow for greater collaboration with the RCMP by ensuring that more officers with more training are available to respond to criminal activity. PPS officers will be available and have appropriate training to be first responders. PPS will also take over duties to allow the RCMP to focus more on front-line policing, for example, prisoner transfer and transport.

The PPS builds on the success of the protection and response team, or the PRT. In 2021 the PRT responded to 48,911 calls along with RCMP officers and were involved in a number of incidents — erratic drivers, collisions, vehicle thefts, break and enters in progress, firearms complaints, domestic violence calls, impaired driving, barricaded people, and threats at schools. This is in addition to thousands of provincial violations and Criminal Code offences they have been involved in since its inception.

The PPS and legislative security unit will be made up of professional public servants. The province employs hundreds of police officers and special constables, and they are considered, for the sake of today's argument and other discussions, they are professional and non-partisan.

So I mean, the example I gave with respect to the PPS was this: a highway traffic officer or conservation officer stops what they believe to be an impaired driver on the highway or on a roadway. What used to happen in years previous is that that highway traffic officer and/or conservation officer would have to wait, call the RCMP and wait for the RCMP to attend.

Now this officer — conservation, highway traffic officer — they can make the appropriate arrest at the scene. You know, give the appropriate demand, take that person to a location where they would obtain a breath sample — obviously if the person didn't refuse, but that's another issue — and sort of follow it through from beginning to end, cradle to grave. And then when the RCMP are not having to involve themselves specifically in the

incident, it allows them to continue doing whatever they're doing, the front-line policing.

So the province is paying for these individuals anyway. They have their very specific and general duties — you know, conservation or highway or whatever the case may be — and that will continue, and that is important. And it has allowed us to enhance what they already do on a daily basis. And it provides more visibility: the marked cars, whatever they may be. It all creates an increased level of public safety, in particular in our rural areas but not exclusively.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. I've got a few questions, but just to follow the example that you're using, that change to allow conservation officers, for example, to be able to make that arrest, that didn't happen this budget. That happened prior to this year, correct?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Sorry, Ms. Sarauer. Can you repeat your question?

[19:15]

Ms. Sarauer: — Sure. I was following your example about a CO [conservation officer] stopping a vehicle that they suspect has an impaired driver. And now because of the changes that have been made, the COs are able to not just stop that individual — don't have to wait for an RCMP officer to come and actually facilitate their arrest — they can make the arrest and go and take them in to get a Breathalyzer and the like. I'm just confirming that that change didn't occur this budget. That happened a few years ago. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — One year's blending into the next.

Mr. Larsen: — Dale Larsen, deputy minister. Ms. Sarauer, in relation to that previous year, I think what you're referring to is in 2017 when we started the initiative of PRT, the protection and response team. And at that time conservation officers and Highway Patrol officers were provided with additional training.

In the case of Highway Patrol officers, they were actually provided with firearms training because they weren't armed at that time. They were also given training in relation to active shooter responses, those type of things, how to respond to a domestic violence incident in progress. That concept is still moving.

They never were able to actually give an appearance notice for an impaired driving charge, for example, that resulted directly from their stop. They would stop the impaired driver, you know, make that determination that the person was impaired, do the proper arrest, and then either take that person for a Breathalyzer or have the RCMP attend.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. So that's the change that's occurring now, is that correct? That's the additional powers that are being provided to these different groups of peace officers?

Mr. Larsen: — Right. Eventually. That's right.

Ms. Sarauer: — Eventually.

Mr. Larsen: — Right.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay.

Mr. Larsen: — You know, the appointments and the designations for their authority have always been with us, administered through the minister, through *The Police Act* and provided by my office. Those specify what their lawful authority is in relation to a provincial statute, very limited on Criminal Code type of investigation, and also their ability to either carry a firearm or intermediate weapon such as pepper spray, those types of things.

Ms. Sarauer: — I suppose what I'm getting to is why the creation of the PPS? The PRT, it sounds like this is sort of the next generation of what was once the PRT. But I'm wondering if you can just walk us through the evolution.

Mr. Larsen: — Yeah, I wouldn't make that connection as a direct result of PRT. The merging of the different peace officer security units, protective units within the province specifically to Highways, SCAN, conservation officers, CSOs [community safety officer] with the Capital Commission, is more so in relation to aligning those types of job duties and peace officer/special constable duties under a ministry that understands that connection with what they do in the field. And then making sure those interoperability benefits are gained through not only the internal collective group getting together as one team but also in having that relationship built in the field with RCMP officers and municipal police officers.

Ms. Sarauer: — Right, because not all of these . . . Correct me if I'm wrong. I feel like I remember asking one year some questions about the highway traffic officers, and that couldn't be answered because it was a Ministry of Highways matter. So is that ensuring that all of these policing-type bodies will be under Corrections and Policing now?

Mr. Larsen: — Right. And that incident that you're reporting to wasn't again the catalyst, but it was one of the things that caused some concern.

Ms. Sarauer: — Fair enough.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I'd like to have Rob speak to aspects of what you're referring to.

Ms. Sarauer: — Sure.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I think might bring some clarity.

Mr. Cameron: — Rob Cameron, assistant deputy minister, policing obviously. So I think some of the things I'd like to share with regards to the PPS is one of the advantages that we will see in the long term is the ability to leverage the resources in a more efficient and effective manner. One of the things that we've noticed over different events that have occurred over time now is that when all of these provincial peace officer entities are separated, there's always a difficulty of coordinating all the efforts into one, sort of everybody rowing in the same direction. So the advantage of PPS, one of the advantages of this is that we have that coordinated, consistent management process, command structure.

So when we do have situations where we need to leverage resources for whatever that may be, whatever kind of situation . . . It could be increasing patrols in certain areas because there's a hot-spot and there's a surge in crime, for example. Or it could be an emergent situation or something that has occurred. It could be everything from a crime type of urgency or it could be a natural disaster, for example. We have the ability to leverage all of those resources more effectively.

The other part of that is we, by having PPS inside of a ministry that is actually a law enforcement ministry, has that experience, has that knowledge — obviously we have a pretty good depth of experience in that type of world — is the ability to enhance and improve the development of the officers, the training levels, the skill sets.

As Dale mentioned earlier, if you go back into the days, early days of PRT, we saw that the PRT members required some additional training to get up to a certain level. Some of those things that we saw them take on were the . . . what I call IARD [immediate action rapid deployment], which is an immediate rapid response to active shooters and things like that.

In addition to that, we saw training for, as I think Dale mentioned also, domestic violence and responses to those kind of things. So if we look now at PPS members and the level of training they receive . . . For example, conservation officers are highly trained. They go through a post-secondary training. They go through their own academy. They come out with a training level that is on par with policing, or at least I like to say it's, you know, a police officer and a conservation officer, their training levels are very, very similar.

With the police . . . or with the Highway Patrol, sorry, there was a requirement to bring them up to a certain level, and now they go to the police college and they get this training. And so that is the professional development of this particular entity and it becomes more effective because it can do more. Bringing all those entities together, as I said before, we can leverage them. We can use them in more emergent situations, but we can also share those skill sets.

And so without getting into too many specifics, but for example SCAN has the ability to work with . . . If Environment was doing an investigation, for example, that involved undercover operators and things like that, there's a way to use SCAN to help provide assistance to that. Or if there was a need for traffic enforcement we could use Highway Patrol.

In fact we saw it recently with the border issues, where we saw Highway Patrol actually going down and assisting RCMP and using their specific skill sets — heavy trucks and the ability to look for infractions and things like that on those heavy trucks — that RCMP members just didn't have that skill set. And it's been a long time since they've been trained in those kind of skill sets, but that's the advantage. That's a practical example of how we could leverage those resources in the longer run.

I think the other part is of course communication and sharing of information. When all of these entities are now combined — and this spreads across not just the PPS but the whole division, my whole division of policing and community safety services — is the ability to share that information back and forth. So sometimes

that's officer safety information. And I think people are very familiar with why that's important, obviously — if there's a trend, a risk towards peace officers or police officers, that we can share that inside that organization.

The other part is just sharing criminal intelligence or maybe trends. For example, we have thefts that are going on in a rural area where you have an increase in that, we can share that information across a variety of different entities to be able to take that and become more effective in tackling that issue. So that's, I know in sort of a nutshell, of a variety of different advantages of the PPS as an entity itself.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. I have a few questions that flow from that. The first is around the training, and you specifically mentioned highway traffic officers. Are they at the level now of . . . Would you describe them as a level of training as COs? Or what sort of training is everyone getting to get them to that level? It says you understand the ability to arrest and, going back to the analogy that the minister was making, obtain a Breathalyzer sample. There's a lot of Charter implications at play. And you want to make sure that those arrests, when made, will withstand any scrutiny in court. So I imagine there's a heightened level of training for that piece, as well as you mentioned the firearms training, the active shooter training, the domestic violence, all of those sorts of things as well.

Mr. Cameron: — I do have an answer. So I think I'm going to have to break it down to a couple of parts here because it's not just a straight response as to . . . And I think your question was, do we have the confidence in them to be able to carry out the duties that they would normally be expected to carry out? So their training . . . Oh, did I frame that wrong?

Ms. Sarauer: — Well I just . . . [inaudible] . . . It's more just the training, to have the training needed to do this work, not necessarily about . . . I don't want you to think that I don't have confidence in any of the staff. I just want to make sure that there's the adequate amount of training for them to be able to do their work.

Mr. Cameron: — And we're specifically referring to the Highway Patrol itself or . . .

Ms. Sarauer: — Well, all of those under PPS who may be now eventually doing arrests and responding to situations that normally they wouldn't under their duties. Probably that's the best way I can describe that.

[19:30]

Mr. Cameron: — So across the board, I believe that everybody's trained to a proper level, have proper skill sets to conduct their core mandates. And in those core mandates . . . Of course we're talking about five different types of entities with all different sorts of levels of response. For example, CSOs under the PPS, they have a very distinct purpose, and their authority is restricted to certain activities.

Conservation officers and Highway Patrol officers have very specific core mandates, and those are important core mandates that we need to make sure they maintain. And we've always . . . With regards to PPS, we're very clear in stating that those

mandates will continue on, and that's very important as we move on. But the training level that a Highway Patrol officer or a conservation officer has is definitely adequate for the duties that they're expected to do in their core duties.

But we've added a certain level of training so they can do some more duties. But that said, I would not say they're at a level that they would take on, for example . . . They certainly wouldn't take on a homicide, for example. Or they wouldn't take on a complex investigation that would be involving techniques and skill sets that you would acquire in the policing world. So we wouldn't expect them to do that either.

So one of the things that we've always looked at, from the PPS point of view, is somebody's not going to do something that they're not trained to do properly. And so that is why we had to go back and look at . . . When the PRT first started we looked at the active shooter training, for example, because that wasn't something that was currently in their training curriculum. So we went back and we trained them in that.

Another example where we've added training, for example, is . . . It's referred to pipeline course, which is a drug interdiction training. And so that the Highway Patrol officers that are on the highway, obviously they have access to people that will be travelling through our province, other provinces, and trafficking in narcotics, for example, or — I probably just aged myself there — a controlled substance.

But from that point of view, they've obtained more training to be able to do that more effectively, so they will meet those parameters and what the expectations are. When they deliver a court or, you know, a report to Crown counsel, they'll be able to do that with . . . and making sure that it meets the standard that we would expect.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. One of the challenges, I imagine, would be when individuals respond to a call, you won't necessarily know that it's not going to be a homicide investigation or responding to a murder. You might think it's responding to a disturbance, or an active shooter even, until it's too late. So how is that addressed in the training or the protocols that are being put in place for these individuals?

Mr. Cameron: — So a couple points. And I'll tackle the one with regards to your question if they were to, say, come across a homicide. And that is absolutely a potential, right? So a Highway Patrol officer or a conservation officer or any law enforcement officer could end up coming across something that turns into a very serious incident, a homicide or aggravated assaults, things like that.

But the peace officers that we have within PPS are trained in how to respond to that, in the sense that if they were to come across . . . Let's say there was a call to a location and they come across and they find a body and there's an apparent homicide. They know how to secure that scene and what they need to do with that. They know that their role is, at that point, to protect the continuity of evidence in the scene itself.

And then through our dispatching network . . . And I'm not sure if you're aware of this or not, but our dispatching comes through SPSA, and we added the provincial 911 system in. So they would

communicate and connect with our police partners, whether it be RCMP, Regina city, wherever the jurisdiction they're in, to have those people respond, the police respond and then take over scene.

And so very much, of course, that would become very important, critically important when we got to a court environment, where we need to have some recollection or some sort of description of how that scene was protected, so we know that the evidence there was maintained properly. So I think that would probably cover over the question that you'd asked.

Ms. Sarauer: — I think so. Just to be clear, not everybody within the PPS will be given the same powers, correct? And I'm thinking specifically with relation to SCAN investigators, for example. They won't have the ability to arrest, similar to highway traffic officers. Is that correct? Or is there a plan to give them the power to arrest as well?

Mr. Cameron: — So I think just to tackle the question with SCAN directly and get that one sort of done, is that at this current time they don't have that authority. They have the authority to arrest, as any citizen would, if they found somebody committing an indictable offence, but they don't have the power of arrest in the sense that . . . I think what you're referring to is more of a 495 power of arrest. So that's not something they have today.

And then one of the things for clarity is that I do see SCAN supporting other entities, as I've spoken about the leverage of the ability, but I don't see them as a proactive arresting unit. That wouldn't be their role. Their function right now, as you're very well aware, is the SCAN Act and the looking at, you know, properties that are involving gangs and drugs and prostitution and child exploitation, those kind of things. Those are all specified in the Act itself, so from my point of view, and then our point of view is that that would continue to be their primary mandate. So I don't foresee a great change there.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Then just to be clear, there is no plan to provide them with any sort of arresting power? I'm not talking about citizen arrest power, but policing arrest power in the future.

Mr. Cameron: — No, not that I've anticipated yet.

Ms. Sarauer: — You mentioned that highway traffic officers are now going through some training through the policing college. Can you provide some more information as to what is being provided to the policing college to deal with this enhancement of services that they're providing at this time?

Mr. Cameron: — If I'm understanding your question, you're looking at what training they receive at the police college is basically what you're asking.

Ms. Sarauer: — No, I mean funding for the police college to provide this training.

Mr. Cameron: — Funding. Okay. Okay.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah.

Mr. Larsen: — Just to recap some of that highway traffic officer, Saskatchewan Police College relationship training. When those

officers were with the Ministry of Highways we had, you know, a handshake agreement in place where one of their senior people was proficient in use-of-force training. So that individual provided training to the police college for all of the recruits that were in the class. In turn, we trained some highway traffic officers for, like I said, the Ministry of Highways.

Now since the budget for the police college falls under us, the administration of the police college falls under the Saskatchewan Police Commission. There's no chargeback. We would train those officers, just like we did in the past, at a police officer training academy, and they receive that same basic training. At this point, I actually thought there was some in this class that's probably scheduled to graduate in the next month or so, but right now there aren't any officers in that class from Highways.

Ms. Sarauer: — Has there been an increase in funding for the police college this fiscal?

Mr. Larsen: — No new money in budget this year specific to the operations of the police college. However there was some funding put towards an assessment of the training needs given the current PPS structure, as well as our municipal police agencies going forward what would be the requirement. So that RFP was sent out mid-January, I believe, and closed about three weeks ago. And again, that's in coordination with the ministry but also the Police Commission.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. And I think I have that OC [order in council] in front of me. It's 69/2022, Buckingham Security Services Funding Agreement for \$254,000, provide training needs assessment to the Sask Police College and PPS branch. Is that the one that you're talking about?

Mr. Larsen: — That's correct.

Ms. Sarauer: — And what exactly are they going to be doing?

[19:45]

Mr. Larsen: — They'll be doing, you know, almost a best practice type of look at what we have in relation to what best practice is in training police officers probably across the country. What we eventually want to make a determination of is what would need to be put in place to train all of our peace officers, special constables under one umbrella, including our municipal police agencies.

Ms. Sarauer: — Including like Saskatoon police and Regina police.

Mr. Larsen: — That's correct. That's training there right now, correct.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. And you said that was an RFP process that was conducted to find the successful proponent?

Mr. Larsen: — That's right.

Ms. Sarauer: — Do you know how many organizations responded to that RFP?

Mr. Larsen: — At the end of the time or the term of the RFP, I

believe there was only one.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Minister, you mentioned that there is \$1.5 million to the Sask crime suppression strategy, which includes the PPS that we've been speaking about. Could you provide a breakdown of what that money's for?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yes. It appears as though I wasn't wearing my glasses at the time. It's 15 million.

Ms. Sarauer: — Oh, okay.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Sorry.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I'm going to be proven to be wrong again.

Mr. Cameron: — So to cover off sort of what we did discover is that the number for the Saskatchewan crime reduction strategy number, for dollars, is 13.636 million. So there was an error in the speaking note. From the point of view of what's in that, so there is five components. The first one is the GPS [global positioning system] electronic monitoring; the STRT, which is the Saskatchewan trafficking response team; an expansion of CRT [crime reduction teams] criminal reduction teams; and then the WEST, which is the warrant enforcement and suppression team; and then PPS as we've been speaking about already.

Ms. Sarauer: — Can you provide me with the dollar figures for each of those five that you mentioned?

Mr. Cameron: — I can.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you.

Mr. Cameron: — So for GPS it's 1.346 million; for STRT it's 6.403 million; for CRT, 3.195 million; for WEST, 1.598 million; and for PPS, 1.094 million.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Now breaking down further into PPS, could you provide some information as to what that money is for within PPS?

Ms. Gallivan: — Hi. Rae Gallivan from policing and community safety services. So the new money for the PPS includes funding for seven new positions. That includes an executive director, some policy positions. I don't recall what all seven positions are doing, but a financial analyst, the new person who will report to me. That's very important. So seven new positions, and then there's accommodations money built in as well for office space and that kind of thing. As well we're looking at potentially a new building to house the entire branch because right now we're fit in about a space about as big as this, so to do a space analysis.

Ms. Sarauer: — So how does the reporting structure work for the PPS? Because I understand and I assume that COs have a reporting structure. Highway traffic officers have a reporting structure, but then there's also the ED [executive director] of the PPS. Thank you for your answer, sorry to kick you to the back again.

Mr. Cameron: — It's always good to bring in the pinch-hitter,

right.

Ms. Sarauer: — Yeah.

A Member: — Bring in the closer.

Mr. Cameron: — We'll see. So the question was about the reporting structure? So PPS has a very distinct reporting structure, very similar to how any law enforcement agency would be set up. We have an executive director — well ultimately I guess he reports to me as the ADM — an executive director that would be responsible for daily operations and administration of the PPS. Below that there's a variety of other executive directors. They'll be the operational leads for each component inside of the PPS.

PPS is broken into three distinct parts. The first part is the enforcement services, which is the conservation officers and the Highway Patrol group. There's a middle, what I call middle earth but it's . . . A little bit of a Tolkien fan I guess, but in this middle earth area there is support services that would support the enforcement folks. So that would be things like the dog service for the conservation officers, or it would be the undercover operators that are with COs as well, could be the professional standards group, things like that that we see inside of the middle group.

And then we get into the other side which is the court security, prisoner transport, and investigative services which includes, as you would guess from the name, court security and prisoner transport but also the other entities that belong in my division from previously, before becoming PPS, so witness protection, the SIU [special investigations unit]. Well the SCAN group is still under that particular line. And that's basically the command or the structure from a governance point of view of inside of the PPS.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. So sorry if I didn't catch this but would, for example, the head . . . And I'm sorry that I'm dumbing this down to my level but, for example, the head of the COs would report to the ED of the PPS? Is that how that structure works?

Mr. Cameron: — No.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay.

Mr. Cameron: — No. And I was going to try and draw it in the air for you but it's a little hard. So there is a chief superintendent that is in charge of the COs. So under that particular line, if you can imagine two branches, there's COs on one side and Highway Patrol within the enforcement section. They both have a chief that reports up to an executive director, an MCP [management classification and compensation plan] 10 level. That person reports to the executive director that is for the entire PPS.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay.

Mr. Cameron: — And then that executive director reports to me.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay, thank you. That makes sense to me. With the visual, now I understand it. You can understand, Minister, that with the work that your ministry has done with enhancing policing in Saskatchewan and the creation of what was the PRT

and . . . I'm making it sound like it's the next generation. We've already had that conversation, not the next generation but what is now the PPS.

In light of what we've seen in some other provinces, including Alberta, there has been some concern in policing organizations about where this is all going, in particular around the future of RCMP in Saskatchewan. So could the ministry provide some clarity as to what they see the role . . . what you see the role of PPS being in relation to, for example, the role of the RCMP in this province?

[20:00]

Hon. Ms. Tell: — In answer to your question and your query, the RCMP are the provincial policing service for this province, now and into the foreseeable future. I want to ask Rob to take that a little bit further in conversations and discussions that he has had.

Mr. Cameron: — Thank you, Minister. Absolutely glad you asked this question because it gives me a chance to speak about the relationship and the ability that we have to work with the RCMP in this province, with PPS being part of that.

Myself, I've had direct conversation with the commanding officer of the RCMP here in the division, the criminal operations officer in the division for the RCMP, talking about the opportunities that we can discover and look at where we can work together throughout this province. Certainly we already have a relationship with the RCMP — no secret there. But there's certainly things that we are looking at is how we can have our officers in PPS and the RCMP better integrated.

That's not just restricted to just the RCMP. I mean we would look at all the police services and maybe other law enforcement agencies as opportunities present themselves. But certainly this is going to be a very collaborative, a very co-operative approach to how we do this.

The PPS is not a replacement for the RCMP. It's not a replacement for any provincial police service. As the minister has said, the RCMP is the police service for this province, the provincial police service for the foreseeable future. In fact there's 10 years left on the contract, so that to me is not an issue that we're going to be dealing with any time shortly.

But I really do look forward to the opportunities where we can enhance things like rural visibility with law enforcement. So for years, people have talked about the need to have more rural visible presence, and this is an opportunity to do that.

We also have the ability and the opportunities to now tackle impaired driving to a larger degree. We can look at drug trafficking. We can look at human trafficking. We've also now got these initiatives like STRT and WEST, which although they're just really being built, they've already become effective. WEST has already seen results with arrests of people that are quite dangerous to society. STRT has already taken drugs and guns off the streets. So these things, I'm very happy and proud to talk about these and really look forward to those opportunities in the future.

What I can tell you though is the RCMP has been very receptive of that as well. And not to get too much into the minutiae of things, but we're also looking at how we can even share locations, for example get access to buildings so we can better process the . . . You know, if we catch impaired drivers, we can take them in there and we can get access to those buildings and work with the police service, whichever, the RCMP or whatever jurisdiction that might be.

But these are certainly positive benefits. And maybe something I should have spoke about earlier when we're talking about the benefits of PPS, but certainly that ability to really leverage that relationship. Interoperability, just the ability to provide a better public safety service to the province.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. And I do very much appreciate the clarity and the opportunity for you to put that on the record. I very much appreciate that. I understand that many in policing, like you had mentioned, see the two new teams, WEST and STRT, as a positive step forward, that more resources is always a good thing.

One of the challenges — and I'm wondering if it's an actual challenge or if it was just a perception — that had been raised to me was on recruitment of these new positions and being able to fill the new positions. As we know, there is a challenge within the RCMP right now of recruitment and retention, so I'm wondering if you can speak to that a bit in terms of the WEST and STRT team, if there's been any challenges with that.

Mr. Cameron: — All right, so very timely question. As you will probably be aware, and I think you were at SUMA when Assistant Commissioner Rhonda Blackmore had actually spoke about this. And yes, I think she acknowledged the fact that there's challenges in recruitment within the policing world, not necessarily just the RCMP but in policing in general. And there's probably lots of reasons for that.

I think, from the point of view of the units, as Assistant Commissioner Blackmore had mentioned, they are strategically looking at how they can fill those units in an attempt not to deplete from any one area too much, but to make sure that those new units get . . . When they can move people over and it makes reasonable sense and it's not going to impact negatively on operations, that she would do that.

I think it's also important I mention that in the STRT unit itself, six of those positions are actually municipal police officer positions too. And their goal is to work in the larger picture and liaise with the STRT teams that are strategically located across the province, and not only act as liaison, but also . . . I think it's safe to assume that most people are aware that drugs come into the province, people are trafficked or guns are trafficked, illegal guns are trafficked into the province, and they go in, they do sometimes make their way to those cities. So it was important that we had some element of STRT that also resided in the municipal policing boundaries, and in our case it's P.A., Saskatoon, and Regina that got those positions.

I think, generally speaking, and one more comment on the staffing, I know the RCMP, you know, has had challenges with depot with COVID and the lack of ability to put cadets through. We've done fairly well in the province, but obviously we would

desire more. But I am confident the RCMP's going to work on that and be able to accomplish that as time goes on. And hopefully COVID, you know, stays very neutral and we can move ahead.

Ms. Sarauer: — So just so I understand, the two new units are operational but they're not fully staffed yet as this time. Can you provide information as to what the staffing complement is now? What vacancies are left to be filled?

Mr. Cameron: — That's one we'll have to get back to you on. I just don't have those in front of me today.

Ms. Sarauer: — Sure, thanks. If you can table it with the committee as soon as possible, that would be fantastic.

Mr. Cameron: — Yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. Now I wasn't going to mention it, but you brought this up, Minister. You indicated that there is a legislative security unit that's a part of the PPS. Can you provide any information as to how much money is being attached to this unit?

Mr. Larsen: — So just in reply to your question, Ms. Sarauer, the initial budget allocation for the legislative security unit was placed on a line item with PPS as more of a placeholder than anything. The actual PPS group that started last week does not structurally have that component of legislative security right now as the whole Bill 70 is still in that debate stage. Did you want the breakdown of the money?

Ms. Sarauer: — Is there a breakdown of money? If so, yes please.

Mr. Larsen: — Okay. So the 1.5 million is allocated towards 11 FTEs. And there was also, I believe, another 440 going to accommodation and capital type of costs.

Ms. Sarauer: — And that's for specifically the legislative security unit? So the 11 FTEs are for the legislative security unit?

Mr. Larsen: — That's correct.

Ms. Sarauer: — And what will be the requirements of those FTEs? Who are they going to be?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Like what skills? What skills? Is that what you . . .

Ms. Sarauer: — I don't need specific names but yeah, what skills. What would . . . their qualifications.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Okay. Okay, yeah. We just wanted to make sure we understood.

Ms. Sarauer: — I mean, unless you have names. I would love to get those on the record.

[20:15]

Mr. Larsen: — And those are to be determined. You know, with the challenges of putting forward a proposal that we think might

address the needs of the people that work in this building and the people that visit this building and the security of this building, that was a number that we came up with. You could probably make the connection that there's currently money being provided to a security unit in the building, and we wouldn't expect there to be an overlap of those funds.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Has there been any conversation as to what the training requirements will be for those 11 FTEs?

Mr. Larsen: — You know, there would obviously be a fundamental security training that would be expected. However, there's also occupations such as retired police officers that might bring that previous experience to that role. And until we actually get down the road of doing a proper risk assessment and security assessment for the building, determining what those resources are looking like in relation to not only numbers but also the hard security items that could be needed for the building, we're unable to, you know, put a definitive, you know, capture on that.

Ms. Sarauer: — So just so that I understand, you mentioned this was put in the budget. There really isn't any concrete plans for what this will look like at this time. Is that correct? Or have plans already been made?

Mr. Larsen: — When we were given this scenario, basically we looked at some different models, and with the information that we had and the experience that we had and some of the, you know, best-case scenarios for this type of security unit, we fell within this, you know, 11 FTEs with a certain dollar figure that takes into consideration some of the components that are already in place within the security unit as it currently exists.

The expectation going forward is one that would, as Rob mentioned, on the PPS side and different policing agencies, it will be collaborative as well. So we would expect to have discussions with the Board of Internal Economy, with the Speaker, with the current Sergeant-at-Arms, and make an informed decision as to what we really need for building security and the safety of individuals working in the building.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. But I'm trying to . . . I'm not . . . I don't want to get spicy tonight. It's hot in this room enough already, and we can save those conversations for a later date when . . . if the bill goes to committee. Hopefully it never does, but if it does then we could have some of the conversations that I want to get into based on what you had just said, Mr. Larsen. But I'm going to table that for now.

I do want to ask one more question about this, though. The individuals who are currently providing security services in this building, has there been any consideration by the ministry to fold them in as a part of these potentially 11 FTEs in this new legislative security unit, should that legislative security unit come to exist in the future?

Mr. Larsen: — At the stage we are at with this initiative — and very preliminary as you know — we don't currently expect there to be any job losses. We're looking at a group of 11 people and we'll have to see how this rolls out over the next weeks to a month.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. I'll maybe table this

conversation for now. Hopefully we won't ever have this conversation in a future bill committee. I still hold out hope that that will happen, that Bill 70 will be scrapped. But if it isn't, then we'll have this conversation at a later date.

Being cognizant of the time, I want to ask a bit about PACT [police and crisis team] teams. I've heard from those in policing about . . . very much positive feedback about the success of PACT teams. Could you provide any information as to whether or not there has been an increase in funding in this budget for that program?

Mr. Cameron: — So with regards to PACT, so in this budget there wasn't any increasing for PACT units. However, I would highlight that there is a program that is going on right now with the RCMP division operational communication centre where there was PACT or a PACT-like model introduced into the DOCC [division operational communication centre], as they call it.

What that does is puts psychiatric nurses into the RCMP dispatch centre so they can . . . For example, if you had a call where somebody was in a state of crisis, mental health issue, that the police officers that are calling in to the DOCC can now be linked to a psychiatric nurse that resides in that communication centre, who then can provide guidance and perhaps actions that they can take with these individuals that they're dealing with. It's actually based on a model that came out of England which worked very well there.

And obviously, so the attending police officers then have the ability to have professional guidance as how they can interact with this person, what they need to do, what they shouldn't do so they don't trigger a negative reaction. They can also identify perhaps certain issues, for example excited delirium and things like that. So this is the advantage of this program. Apparently it's working well. That's what I've been told. And I think it's been well received by the field as well.

Ms. Sarauer: — I imagine it would be. Why was there a decision not to expand the PACT program this budget cycle?

Mr. Cameron: — So with regards to funding, this year we were able to obtain funding to increase ICE [internet child exploitation], however we weren't able to get funding for PACT. We're under right now doing a process of evaluation and looking at where we could find other areas to expand PACT to and look for budget . . . ask to get more money for PACT. We believe it's a very effective program. The evaluation that has been done has shown it to be extremely effective and also well received by not only the public but the policing folks as well.

So we definitely believe in it. We do have though, and I think it's important to acknowledge, that it's a partnership with Health. So there's two entities that we have to work together in trying to work towards getting this additional funding, but that's a process we're working through in this year. And hopefully I'll have something to talk about for next year.

Ms. Sarauer: — Hopefully. Thank you and thank you for that advocacy. I understand it's a partnership with Health. I'll make sure that my colleague hassles the Ministry for Health just as much as I hassle the Ministry for Corrections for that important

work.

Do want to talk about the gang reduction strategy a little bit before we move on to . . . Hopefully I can get some of the other folks that are behind you on some other questions that I have. But let's talk a bit about the gang reduction strategy. You were speaking a bit about community intervention and some referrals that were made. I'm wondering if you could provide some further information.

[20:30]

Mr. Wilby: — Drew Wilby, community engagement. Yeah, so the community intervention model has been up and running since January of 2020. We have two delivery partners. One is STR8UP in Saskatoon and North. The other is RT/SIS [Regina Treaty/Status Indian Services Inc.] delivering the program in Regina and South. STR8UP receives \$750,000 a year; RT/SIS, 375,000. So far 273 gang-affiliated individuals have been referred to the CIM program, community intervention model program, since January of 2020. There's currently 119 clients actively participating in programming across the province.

I think as we've talked before, but there's three phases of the community intervention model. Phase 1 is really that initial outreach. Phase 2 starts to wrap program and support around. And phase 3 is where we start to pull back on how much intervention is done and really that full reintegration once gang life has been left. And so currently STR8UP has 67 clients in phase 1, 26 in phase 2, and zero in phase 3. RT/SIS has 12 in phase 1, nine in phase 2, and five in phase 3.

Ms. Sarauer: — Moving forward, I'm just wondering about the life cycle of this program. Is there an intention that the funding for these two organizations will remain essentially as permanent as provincial funding is, but as permanent as possible? Or is this a program with a time frame on it?

Mr. Wilby: — At this point, this is funded through the federal government's money that came as part of their — I can't say the word — guns and gangs violence action fund. We are conducting a . . . Sorry, it comes out as . . . [inaudible] . . . whatever that is.

We are conducting an evaluation in the province. We've signed a contract with The Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] for 96,000. They'll conduct a study and evaluation on it for us this year; that, coupled with the DSATU work as well as the SIIG [Saskatchewan integrated intelligence group] initiative and the prosecution pieces as well, which make up the pillars of the entire gang-violence reduction strategy.

We understand Public Safety Canada is doing an evaluation as well, and we are pushing them as hard as we possibly can to try to get some commitment of funding in out years for this. If not, of course we'll look at this provincially and see where we go. This is the last funded year from the feds for the program.

Ms. Sarauer: — Right. Sorry, I did know that this was federal dollars, but completely forgot. And I'm happy to hear that there is some work, hoping and pushing the feds to continue on with that funding. But it sounds like, based on what you said, that if

the feds decide not to fund this into the future, that the province will be looking into potentially funding this. Is that correct?

Mr. Wilby: — Depending on what the evaluation shows, you know, from anecdotally and where we are, and in particular the work of STR8UP across the North. And they're in communities like Onion Lake, which of course is the home of the Westside Outlaws, doing significant work in there. They're into Prince Albert and the west side flats area, North Battleford, and then trying to reach the Northeast as well, and doing some pretty significant work at the front end which, of course, is that intervention pillar for us.

So depending on that evaluation, if it is successful, we would look to come back if the feds won't fund it, probably through our provincial budget ask. But of course there's still a few i's to dot and t's to cross before then. And again, any help on the Public Safety Canada front would be very beneficial for us.

Ms. Sarauer: — Sounds good. Thank you so much for that update.

Mr. Cameron: — Hi. I just wanted to be able to contribute a little bit to that as well because SIIG is another part of that GVRs, and I think it's something I'd like to highlight as well. Certainly the SIIG program, that's been in place since the start of the GVRs, is proving to be a worthwhile way of sharing that criminal intelligence.

And if you remember back to the conversation I had with PPS and the sharing of information, SIIG is another component of not PPS, but in the division, in my policing division where we bring in partners from all different kinds of law enforcement and be able to exchange that information appropriately, but within the group of law enforcement, providing better intel on trends of how drug trafficking is going on, illegal firearms trafficking, the issues we . . . And it also involves components of the corrections system.

So there's a link to . . . And I know you're aware of this, but there's a link between what happens inside corrections in the facilities and what happens on the street, and obviously there's a continuing line of business there. So I think it's important to recognize in the GVRs, that became a critical component as well.

And the GVRs has multiple parts to it, pillars in it. But certainly as we go forward, and I look forward to obviously the federal government continuing the funding here, but it certainly is a worthwhile program and part of the GVRs. So thank you.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. I appreciate that. I'd like to ask a few questions of the Sask Public Safety Agency, if possible, SPSA. I'm losing the acronyms . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I know. I'm sorry. Thank you. Could you provide a breakdown of the budget for this fiscal?

Ms. Florizone: — Teresa Florizone, vice-president, Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency. So the breakdown of the budget for SPSA is made up of about \$2.5 million and that's the increase. This \$2.5 million is made up of about \$200,000 in regards to the emergency preparedness and fire safety public education; \$100,000 for the increase in First Nations and community evacuation planning; 196,000 for disaster mitigation

adaptation fund projects. So those are the mitigation projects in regards to the federal program that we have that are for the clearings of the brush where we protect the communities.

And about 1.937 million for the centralized costs and support for the ITD [information technology division], the accommodations and collective bargaining for just the CBA's [collective bargaining agreement] increases that we have for the agency that we belong to, SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union].

And a \$200,000 decrease in regards to visual identity for the areas such as uniforms, vehicles, and signage that we have on our vehicles, because last year we did have the increase that we actually had public promotion and the ability to give us some recognition of who SPSA is, Saskatchewan Public Safety.

Ms. Sarauer: — I didn't hear anything with respect to COVID. Did I miss that or are there . . .

Ms. Florizone: — That's correct. Our base budget for Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, the agency does not have COVID dollars per se over the base budget. If there is any need for COVID costs for that, that would be over and above the base budget, and we would go back for supplementary estimates because we anticipate COVID is going to be status quo of our base budget.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Is the COVID response still flowing through the SPSA?

Mr. Pritchard: — Sorry, could you repeat the question? Sorry.

Ms. Sarauer: — I'm just wondering because I didn't hear anything in the breakdown of the budget with respect to COVID. And I'm just wondering whether or not . . . I thought that the COVID response was still being operationalized out of the SPSA and whether or not that was correct.

Mr. Pritchard: — No, the PEOC [provincial emergency operations centre] was, I guess, immobilized at the end of February or into mid-March, I guess. We are still involved but not . . . It's more just in regards to the rapid test kits, coordinating the distribution of that. Prior to that, absolutely we had the PEOC, and SPSA was involved with helping coordinate, you know, activities between SHA, Ministry of Health, and ourselves. But that has been discontinued, so there has been no dollars asked in our base budget.

Ms. Sarauer: — Why was that decision made?

Mr. Pritchard: — The decision for . . .

Ms. Sarauer: — To disband the PEOC.

Mr. Pritchard: — Well part of the PEOC process is it's a way of managing an incident, and it's about . . . We know once it gets down to almost business as usual, living with COVID, it is no longer an emergency or requires that level of coordination through an incident command system, which is a very structured process. It becomes more as business as usual. Not saying that if something happens in the next months, years, that this cannot be reactivated because, again, it is a proven system that is available

and can be literally enacted within about 48 hours or less, depending on the severity of it.

Ms. Sarauer: — What was the trigger that originally centralized the COVID response to PEOC?

Mr. Pritchard: — PEOC has always been activated. Just right back from the start in March of 2020, we always had a role to play in regards to assisting Health or assisting SHA, assisting communities, coordinating activities across SPSA, across governments, sharing information through our intelligence unit, across government, agencies, Crowns, ensuring that we had a good understanding of the situation.

When the fourth wave hit in the fall, it was felt that a centralized, I guess unified, command system would be a better approach, or an opportunity to bring all of the entities under one command system. And the whole idea of that was to, again, coordinate and flow information quickly, confirm information, and allow for faster decision making, and bringing resources in from, again, across government, across SPSA, SHA, Ministry of Health, where and when needed. So again it's utilizing that system to streamline the dealing of whatever that issue is, and in this case it was COVID.

Ms. Sarauer: — And just to reiterate what you had already said, should it need to be restarted again, that could be done within 48 hours?

Mr. Pritchard: — Or less. I mean literally the structure is there. The system is there. It's really a plug and play. I mean we have an org chart. All we need to do is identify the people that have those special skill sets and put them in there and we're up and running. So literally we could be up even faster than that.

Ms. Sarauer: — And again, just to reiterate, so the only work the SPSA is doing right now with respect to COVID is distribution of the rapid tests. Is that correct?

Mr. Pritchard: — That is correct. We still have some PPE in stock, and we would supply it if requested, but that's not our primary. Right now it's just the rapid test kits that are, of course, moving across the province to, you know, well over 600 distribution points.

Ms. Sarauer: — Could you provide some more information about the rapid test distribution rollout?

Mr. Pritchard: — Okay. In basically November of 2021, again part of the PEOC process was to assist with taking some pressure off of SHA, the Ministry of Health. And so as part of that we ended up taking over about 75 per cent of the Test to Protect program. And what that is, is distribution of the rapid test kits throughout the province.

So we have a unit that does the logistics, coordinates with the distribution points, and again built that distribution network, in all fairness. Started with libraries, started with chambers of commerce, fire departments; branched out to a number of private businesses, including the Co-ops, which was a phenomenal, you know, I guess I'll call it a win because they reached into so many small communities.

And then through that we developed a, I guess, a pull system. So once we identified a distribution point based on population, based on a number of factors, rapid test kits were sent out to those distribution points with the instruction of, when you get low, call our number or email us at SPSA. And we would send out another number of rapid test kits as long as they were available. So that's how that worked.

To date we have rolled out, through SHA internal, 4.281 million kits; NITHA [Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority] and ISC [Indigenous Services Canada], we've rolled out 2.739 million kits; schools, 2.468 million; congregate living, 633,000, just over 633,000; law enforcement and fire departments, we supplied them with 191,600. EMS, just about 16,000; through the Test to Protect program, just under 300,000; and then public distribution points, those over 600 community sites, 8,680,275 kits went out to the public distribution site.

[20:45]

Part of that process of reporting it up, of course, is also reaching out every couple of weeks to the different distribution sites, and building, you know, what that stock picture is. And our crew did a phenomenal job in keeping a running tab of our hot spots in areas that needed the rapid test kits to be deployed.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. That's a lot of kits. Have there been any issues with accessibility or pressure points, any times when there's been a depletion and you weren't able to fill any of the requests?

Mr. Pritchard: — No, we have not ever not been able to. You know, again thanks to the federal supply, we've been able to ask for about 4.3 million a month up until, I guess it would be March. And for the most part that was supplied, sometimes a little bit, you know, delayed a couple weeks, like a lot of supply issues are now. But no, we were always able to — and again thanks to our crew being able to juggle and hit priorities, move stuff internally — we were always able to supply when somebody made a request.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. That's a lot of distribution points and a lot of kits so a lot of work for your staff. So thank you for all of that, that continued work. Cognizant of the time, I'm going to ask a few questions about correctional facilities again. Thank you for your responses, Mr. Pritchard.

I would be remiss if we didn't get in estimates where I didn't ask for point-in-time counts for the facilities. So if that could be provided, that would be great.

Ms. Scriver: — Hi. Heather Scriver. So the adult custody facility capacity counts: Regina correctional centre . . . This is as of today. At Regina correctional centre, there is a count of 731 — 362 are sentenced and 369 are remanded. So for remanded capacity, that's 51 per cent. Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford, there's 10 male offenders and seven female for a total count of 17. Nine of those are sentenced and eight are remanded. Prince Albert Correctional Centre, 474 males — 200 sentenced and 274 are remanded, for a percentage of 58 per cent.

If we go down to Pine Grove Correctional Centre, we have 184 females in there — 65 are sentenced; 120, or 65 per cent, are

remanded. Saskatoon Correctional Centre, we have 533 males. And in there we also have the reintegration unit, the female reintegration unit, with 12 offenders in there. So the total count for Saskatoon Correctional Centre as an entity is 546 — 209 are sentenced; 337 are remanded, which is 63 per cent remanded.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you for that. This is the part of the night where I start panicking with time and start lightning-round asking questions that I forgot to ask. And you reminded me that I wanted to ask some questions about Sask Hospital North Battleford, the corrections side. Could you provide some information as to how many beds are currently open on the custody side of Sask Hospital?

Ms. Scriver: — There's currently 17 . . . How many beds are open out of the 48?

Ms. Sarauer: — Forty-eight out of . . . 48 beds are available, are open. Out of, isn't it 90-some that . . .

Ms. Scriver: — It's 96.

Ms. Sarauer: — 96.

Ms. Scriver: — Right.

Ms. Sarauer: — So 48 out of a total of 96 beds are open?

Ms. Scriver: — Right.

Ms. Sarauer: — How many are currently being utilized out of the 48?

Ms. Scriver: — 17.

Ms. Sarauer: — I'm surprised that number is so low. Could you provide an explanation for why that would be?

Ms. Scriver: — As I explained last year at estimates too, it has to do with the recruitment of the psychiatrists. Our offenders can only be admitted to the hospital under psychiatrist's approval, so there is . . . the process is there for that. However, they're still recruiting psychiatrists to admit offenders to Sask Hospital. There's nursing issues there as well. So it's staffing.

Ms. Sarauer: — So from what I understand, last time we spoke about this, the reason why there are only 48 of the 96 beds open is because of staffing challenges and recruitment challenges with nursing.

Ms. Scriver: — Correct.

Ms. Sarauer: — Now the reason why there are only 17 offenders in the 48 beds are because of the bottleneck with having a psychiatric referral?

Ms. Scriver: — Yes, you are correct. That is the reason why the numbers are low at SHNB [Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford] in the correction side of the facility. It has to do with staffing challenges. I mean this question was asked also of the Ministry of Health. And it's right across Canada. Health care staff, there's challenges with recruitment of health care staff.

Our admissions to SHNB on the secure side occur once per week. And again with the shortage of psychiatrists who do that admission process, that resource is stretched.

Ms. Sarauer: — I'm thinking specifically about an article, a news article that came out this morning about a specific instance where there is an individual in custody right now who's court-ordered to go to Sask Hospital, who's currently sitting in a medical unit in one of our correctional facilities waiting to get there to get that treatment.

So what's the issue here? Why are folks like this individual having to sit in a medical unit in a correctional facility when they should be at Sask Hospital, which is what I understand the whole point of the build of Sask Hospital was to be?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yeah. The Sask Hospital was indeed built or redone, intended in a large way to look after offenders that are, whether on remand or sentenced, experiencing mental health issues, challenges, crisis. With respect to this type of situation that was highlighted today, offenders that have court-ordered mental health assessments are held in our care until health professionals at SHNB can complete the assessment. After the assessment, the individual would be transferred back into our care and will continue through the justice process.

You know, as we were talking about the issue of recruitment and retention, I know — and Heather Scriver spoke to that — the challenges with respect to health care workers. And we're indeed, you know, I mean we feel that right across the board here. And you know, when they're only doing assessments for offenders once a week, it is indeed going to leave us wanting, for sure, for sure. And you know, this is something that we have to, as a government, work our way through with strategies to try and improve it. And it certainly isn't optimum. Oh yes. Heather has something to say.

Ms. Scriver: — Just further on that. There's a misconception that the forensic unit where these court-ordered clients go for their assessment . . . The forensic unit is not part of the 96 beds. So that's run by the SHA not Corrections and Policing.

Ms. Sarauer: — Okay. Do you know what the current wait-list is for Corrections side inmates to access the beds that are available at Sask Hospital or to get an evaluation by a psychiatrist, I suppose?

Ms. Scriver: — We have everything but the response to your question.

Ms. Sarauer: — Will you commit to tabling that information at a later date?

Ms. Scriver: — Yes.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you. I think the Chair is starting to give me the hook, so I will take this opportunity to thank you, Minister, for answering my questions, and especially to your officials for being here this evening. Thank you for your thoughtful responses to all of my questions. My apologies if I never got to you this evening. I always feel horrible when you have to sit in estimates and I never even get to asking you a question. Please know that I very much appreciate and thank you

for all of the work that you do, you and all of your staff team within the ministry.

[21:00]

So thank you for the opportunity to ask some questions this evening. Thank you to you, Mr. Chair, as well as the dutiful committee of IAJ [Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice]. It's always a pleasure to sit with you. As well as the committee staff and Hansard and legislative services and those security folks keeping us safe out there. Thank you.

The Chair: — I think it's me. So as we said, having reached our agreed-upon time in consideration . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yeah, I'm there. Coming up. Big finish. Okay. Well we're going to . . . Anyway, Minister Tell, why don't you thank everybody and the closing comments and then I'll say my last spiel. Go.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Okay. All right. All right. I too want to thank the committee — and the beautiful committee apparently, the absolutely stunning committee — and of course you, Mr. Chair, and all of these people back here. This province is indeed very, very fortunate. And I mean . . . And these two, too. I don't want to ever think that they are being excluded.

On behalf of the people of the province, I certainly want to express my gratitude and my appreciation. Every one of them can be counted on and are diligent in doing their job in serving the people of the province. And I'm very proud to work with all of them and . . . Not you. But yes, and so I'm going to leave it at that.

Everybody, even though there were no questions of any of the people here — yeah, see I'm getting a windup — it doesn't mean that they all haven't had input into what happened here tonight. So thank you . . .

A Member: — Bless you.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Bless you. Yeah, you need it. So anyway I'm finished.

The Chair: — All right. So thank you, Minister. And again I'd like to thank you, Minister. I'd like to thank the officials. Ms. Sarauer, I'd like to thank you, the committee, and of course Hansard. And that concludes our business for today. I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment.

Mr. Grewal: — I will make that motion.

The Chair: — Mr. Grewal has moved. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This committee stands adjourned until 3:15 tomorrow.

[The committee adjourned at 21:02.]