



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE**

## **Hansard Verbatim Report**

**No. 33 — April 29, 2024**

**Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. Randy Weekes  
Speaker**



**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

**Twenty-Ninth Legislature**

### **Hansard on the Internet**

*Hansard* and other documents of the  
Legislative Assembly are available  
within hours after each sitting.

<https://www.legassembly.sk.ca/Calendar>

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE**

Mr. Terry Dennis, Chair  
Canora-Pelly

Ms. Erika Ritchie, Deputy Chair  
Saskatoon Nutana

Mr. Todd Goudy  
Melfort

Mr. Gary Grewal  
Regina Northeast

Mr. Travis Keisig  
Last Mountain-Touchwood

Mr. Blaine McLeod  
Lumsden-Morse

Ms. Nicole Sarauer  
Regina Douglas Park



[The committee met at 14:47.]

**The Chair:** — Good afternoon. I'd like to welcome everybody to Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice meeting. My name is Terry Dennis; I'll be chairing the meeting. With us today we have Ms. Erika Ritchie; Mr. Todd Goudy; Mr. Gary Grewal; Marv Friesen subbing in for Travis Keisig; Blaine McLeod; and Jennifer Bowes subbing in for Nicole Sarauer.

Before we begin, I'd like to table the amendments to IAJ 2-29, IAJ 12-29, and IAJ 13-29, which are the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel's 2020, 2021, 2022 lists of regulations filed, and amendments . . . addendums, sorry, to IAJ 17-29 and IAJ 19-29, which are the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel's 2017 and '19 reports on regulations and bylaws.

I'd also like to table three reports from the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel that identify any issues pursuant to rule 147(2) that he found within the regulations and bylaws filed in 2020, 2021, and 2022, and any steps that have been taken to rectify these issues.

If the committee chooses, it may bring in the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel to review these reports at subsequent meetings.

Those reports are IAJ 21-29, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: 2020 report on regulations and bylaws; IAJ 22-29, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: 2021 report on regulations and bylaws; and IAJ 23-29, Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: 2022 report on regulations and bylaws.

Today we will be considering the estimates and supplementary estimates no. 2 for the Ministry of Government Relations and voting on committee resolutions.

**General Revenue Fund  
Government Relations  
Vote 30**

**Subvote (GR01)**

**The Chair:** — We will begin with consideration of vote 30, Government Relations, central management and services, subvote (GR01). Minister McMorris is here with his officials. I'd remind the officials to please identify yourselves and not to touch the microphones.

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the committee members for allowing us this time to go through our estimates and hopefully vote them off at the end. Sheldon Green is the acting deputy minister, and Jeff Markewich to my left is assistant deputy minister. And I've got a great, an excellent group of officials behind me that can answer — help me answer or answer themselves — many of the questions that will come forward.

Certainly glad to see the opposition critic, Ms. Ritchie, back and feeling better hopefully because we did change the estimates

from I think Wednesday of last week to today, which worked out fine with us. We did go over two and a half hours, and I think for the most part it was First Nations, Métis relations, and Northern Affairs where all those questions were mainly directed, and we'd be willing to revisit any of that if the critic so chooses.

But there are many other areas, including the Provincial Capital Commission. And I would just say at the outset, I mean, Ms. Ritchie, you can ask your questions in whatever order you want, but if you did have some, for example on the Provincial Capital Commission, there's two or three officials that are specific for that. We can kind of have them sit through the first couple hours and answer questions at the end or, if you wanted to shift and have them answer any questions that you may have and then may not need to spend the rest of the afternoon here. As riveting as it might be, there's probably . . . But I'll just leave it up to the critic.

And with that . . .

**The Chair:** — Thank you for your opening comments, Minister. I'll now open it up for questions. Ms. Ritchie.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And perhaps I will just start by thanking the committee and the officials for accommodating my absence last week and rescheduling to this afternoon. It's greatly appreciated, so thank you to all of you for that.

I do want to kind of start at a high level in my questions, and we'll see where we can get the questions on anything related to the Capital Commission, depending on kind of how this flows out. But I do take note of your request.

You've made reference of course in your opening remarks last week — I'll stick to the first two and a half hours of committee — to the amount of money from the municipal revenue-sharing program and the amount of increase that that reflects over previous years. It's also the case that that 14.2 per cent increase is based on, you know, a formula that is dependent on the expansion of the PST [provincial sales tax], which is why we see that increase.

But yet at the same time what we are seeing is our communities under stress, struggling from both a lack of sufficient funding for the additional responsibilities that they are confronting, issues related to homelessness, to addictions, increased levels of violence. There's been some recent very disturbing accounts in recent weeks of responses both in our two major cities, Regina and Saskatoon, but also we're seeing the same thing reflected in cities across this province when it comes to social issues, housing issues, cost of living, policing. And our communities are really struggling.

And so that being the context in which, you know, we are seeing this record amount of spending and revenue sharing with the cities, is it your view that there is adequate funding going to our cities when they have these increased responsibilities responding to these issues that are reaching such critical levels in our both urban and rural centres?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you for the question. So a couple of things there to kind of unpack, I guess, for lack of a better term,

is I think we all agree that the increase in the PST, the revenue sharing for municipalities, is significant at 14.2 per cent, highest increase we've ever seen. I just want to maybe explain how that is determined. You mentioned a formula. The formula is 0.75 per cent of one point from two years previous, so that would put this PST from the fiscal year of '22-23.

The member mentioned that the huge increase was because of the expansion. That is not why we're seeing that increase in the PST right now because the expansion was in '18-19, four years previous. So that wouldn't be why there is an increase in the PST in the province. What that would be, why there's an increase in the PST in the province is because of extra spending, investment into the province, all over the province.

And you know, I just think of that area, and I've been around Humboldt and Jansen and LeRoy. I think we played hockey in LeRoy at a BHP hockey game, and how much fun that was. But you think of the spending in that area, and PST is on that. So the expenditures throughout the province, both really for individuals coming out of COVID and for companies, would explain the vast, vast majority of the increase in the revenue sharing that communities are seeing.

And I think that's the uniqueness of this program and why it is so important. And you know, I've both been at SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] in bear pits over the last couple months and there was no question on the PST and the revenue sharing that they're getting. They're all very, very thankful.

But the best part about the program is the more that they do to expand their economies, the more their economies are growing, the more it benefits them as well. So that's why, you know, if there was a downturn, which there was kind of at the very early parts of COVID that particular year, we all share in that downturn. But more importantly what we've seen over the last number of years is the increase in economic development and how we all share on the PST.

And then the other part of the question was about, you know, some of the struggles that communities are having, that cities are having. And I certainly can't answer any questions when it comes to social services. I can't answer any questions when it comes to health care. Perhaps housing in the future, because the federal government seems to want to put all the infrastructure money tied to housing.

[15:00]

I would say, the other thing that over the last couple years . . . And I heard it loud and clear. Maybe not necessarily at the bear pit but certainly on breakout sessions. And I'm sure you, the member opposite who was there, would have heard how important the ICIP [Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program] program was because it was very few strings attached. Communities could put into, you know, whether it's a kind of a green stream but pretty broad . . . or recreation stream, or there was the public transit stream.

And there got to be more and more flexibility, and how important that funding was so that communities could meet their

infrastructure needs. I was at a great grand opening of the Odessa Community Hall two weeks ago on a Saturday night, all funded through ICIP funding and then a whole lot of community money because of course a lot of the projects, with the increase in expenditures, were coming in certainly over budget and they would have to make up the difference I think almost to a community.

But when you go to a grand opening like that in Odessa and the community hall, I think they ended up with a little over \$400,000 from both federal and provincial and the hall came in at 1.3 million, that the community made up the difference. And at that, there was 7,000 hours of community work. They did all the gyprocking. They did all the tinning. They did everything that they could do and brought that hall in.

So there's no question in certain communities there's some social services issues and definitely some, you know, some health care issues, but that wouldn't kind of fall under us. I can only talk about, you know, the areas that we're responsible for.

And for urbans and rurals there is really three or four ways they get . . . there is really only two ways they get revenue. That's through property tax — which is I mean their own call; we do the education property tax — and then there's government grants, whether it's the provincial sales tax, whether it's the former gas tax through the Canada Community-Building Fund, or whether it's the ICIP program.

And there's some other ones in there, but it really is government-to-government funding. That's probably how they generate their revenue. And I know to a community they are all pretty happy with a 14.2 per cent increase on the part that we fund them.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you for that response, Mr. McMorris. And you know, in terms of what you were saying about when the expansion of the PST happened and how that contributed overall to the provincial sales tax base back in 2018 as you mentioned versus what we're seeing reflected two years ago, which is the basis. I mean I would just also note that inflation is driving a lot of that. And Saskatchewan people are struggling to meet that cost of living. Mortgage arrears are the highest in the country. Everything is going up.

And so that has a direct bearing on the ability of municipalities also to continue to service their cities' and towns' needs, continue to provide those services, so on and so forth. So it becomes a little bit of a circular argument, right, because as costs go up then, you know, the funding also has to keep pace. And so you know, there's been the ongoing call, particularly from SUMA, that PST be removed from construction labour on projects that, you know, those capital projects that they're building in their communities.

And it almost becomes a bit of a shell game in terms of sort of following the money and seeing, you know, like . . . Well I think the argument you gave me last year when we talked about this was that well they'll pay it but then, you know, it'll go back into the revenue space. But overall they're behind and they don't get ahead.

And I'm wondering if you can tell me why you didn't follow that request that was very loud and clear, and has been for a number of years now, to remove PST from construction labour on

municipal projects as has been requested by SUMA and others?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yeah, I'm quite aware of SUMA's ask of what they would like to see. They were certainly I think maybe louder last year than perhaps this year when they see a 14.2 per cent increase in municipal revenue sharing.

But first I will go down this road just a little bit, but not too terribly far because these are really Ministry of Finance questions. Those decisions are made in treasury board, not at Government Relations. And I know Finance has already had their estimates, so I'm not sure the critic asked any questions on this or not. I watched for a while; I didn't see any. But that's where these questions would best go to is the Ministry of Finance as opposed to ourselves, because that's a decision of the Ministry of Finance, to broaden the PST.

But what I will say is that the broadening . . . We want to make sure that we're properly comparing because the broadening wasn't all the PST that the municipalities are paying. It's only the labour portion that the municipalities were paying. They were always paying PST on materials. It's the labour portion which, you know, it can be significant but that was the broadening.

And what I've always said, and again this is just for a debate I guess, debatable point, is that if you're going to take the labour off of — and you've mentioned it specifically — municipal projects, then why wouldn't we take the PST off of labour on all government projects? Because we do an awful lot of spending and if we're going to take it off of government projects, then why don't we take it off of Crown corporations, which spend billions on construction every year as we do in government?

So again, you know, it could be a Finance question to try and work all that out. But they just can't have it kind of one way, whether it was just only on municipal labour and then every other level of government pays, because it would be really to the benefit . . . And maybe that is certainly what you would like to see, and I would be very interested to know kind of where your stance is on that. That's certainly been our stance.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — So you know, I guess part of the issue here is that the ability for urban centres to raise revenue has been diminished. There's the grants-in-lieu is one example of that. There have been others. You know, there's the lack of ability to tax school properties. Those are just a couple that sort of are top of mind for me right now.

And so I think the context in which municipal centres have been calling for a rollback of tax is in light of the fact that their tax base has been diminished, while at the same time that they continue to experience offloading. Urban centres are picking up the tab and the slack by your government in terms of providing adequate supports in areas — as I've already mentioned — housing, social services. There's a direct linkage here between the issues confronting municipalities and the lack of provincial government funding for social services, for health services. I mentioned those areas already and the attendant issues also associated with that.

We know that the level of crime that we're seeing in our communities and the ability of municipal police forces to meet those needs — fire departments responding to mental health and

addiction, you know, emergencies, overdoses; the list goes on — and their ability to meet all of those challenges is severely handicapped. And the funding, while it may have increased substantially over past years, is still insufficient.

And so while you may be able to point to other ministries such as Social Services or maybe Justice or treasury and say, well go talk to that department, you are the Minister of Government Relations. You are the one who has the responsibility for municipal affairs. You are the one that's able to champion their concerns and their issues and ensure that your counterparts around the cabinet table are responding adequately to those issues and using your influence, both as a seasoned member of that cabinet table and the Minister for Government Relations, to ensure that adequate funding is coming.

And that is why I asked this question about why you're not doing more to ensure that urban centres have the funding — and rural centres as well; I don't mean to just focus solely on them — but that the needs are being adequately met by municipalities.

[15:15]

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Just I guess I'll start by kind of where the member started about revenues diminishing towards municipalities. And you used two examples — grants-in-lieu. Now grants in lieu of property tax, I would like to know where you found evidence that government proper has diminished the grants-in-lieu as taxes. That hasn't happened. And then you also mentioned taxes on schools. They've never been charged.

So you can't diminish something, for example, that's never been charged on schools and/or diminish grants-in-lieu. In fact they've gone up 300,000 this fiscal year over last fiscal year. So you know, I can certainly understand your concern around health care and education and social services. But I think that's what you saw in this year's budget, which we are debating today — you know, the increase in social services, some 8 per cent; in health care, 10 per cent; in education, a record lift in education.

So you know, am I lobbying . . . I'm not lobbying for cities or RMs [rural municipality]; I'm lobbying for people in the province. And that's what we do and that's what we look at, what those priorities are. And that's what this budget was, was certainly an increase in communities, which is 14.2 per cent in municipal revenue sharing; in classrooms, which was a record amount in education; and in community, classroom, and health care. And the increase in the health care budget was significant, record amounts again.

So you know, that argument is put forward all the time. I am involved in certain programs such as municipal revenue sharing, which we're here to talk about a lot more, such as any of the funding that we do through Government Relations.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Well I can certainly go back and, you know, sort of review some of those examples that had been brought to my attention in the past. And I don't have those in front of me. It's my understanding, though, that the ability to generate revenue by municipalities has been limited in certain respects from the way it was historically. And perhaps I can get one of my staff people to follow up with some more information and we can revisit that later this afternoon.

But you know, the case still remains that we are seeing unprecedented social issues in our communities. I appreciate that there's other ministers that have sort of more direct responsibility at a provincial level for these cases. But ultimately it is that front line of municipal governments that are there picking up the shortfall and addressing those social issues that stem from shortfalls within those other ministerial areas, social services and health being sort of the primary . . . well and justice, also being the primary ones.

And that is the basis for the question. And it's quite concerning when we see incidents like in the beginning of April where, you know, you had seventy . . .

**The Chair:** — Ms. Ritchie, I would ask you that you stay on the estimates towards Government Relations, please.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Yeah, no, absolutely.

**The Chair:** — You're going off a tangent on a different area.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — I don't think I am, but I will do my best.

**The Chair:** — I do believe you are.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Okay. Well so, I mean, the question comes back directly to the amount of revenue sharing based on the formula that is in place right now and whether or not it's sufficient to meet the needs of these communities. And what I'm pointing out is the fact that there is a shortfall. And where that is showing up is in these other areas, those being houselessness, crime, mental health, and addictions.

And so when the urbans and rural centres are asking for tax relief on things such as PST on construction labour, they're asking for that relief so that there's more funds available for them to address these added pressures that they're seeing in these other areas. And that's where I sort of point to what we're seeing where there's record levels of overdoses, suicides, violent incidents in our communities.

And you know, community members . . . When I'm on the doorstep, I'm hearing a lot of concern about all these issues. They're concerned about their own safety and they're concerned about the safety of vulnerable populations who are directly living rough on the street, experiencing issues of violence, gang activity, you know, addictions, HIV [human immunodeficiency virus]. And so it is directly germane to the budget that we see before us here today.

And it's why I wanted to start by asking these questions upfront about whether or not you think that the amount of funding, record level as it may be, if you feel that is sufficient to address the pressures that communities are facing, that the caucus of city mayors has been raising and bringing to your attention, meeting with you on these issues.

And so I would just ask the question again. Do you think that this budget is providing sufficient funding to rural and urban municipalities to address the increasing issues that they're facing?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate

you trying to keep it on what we're responsible for, for Government Relations. I appreciate that. I'll just touch on a couple things that were mentioned in the preamble. One was, you know, that the municipalities said that if they could reduce the labour portion . . . I think it was her words. I don't think it would necessarily be SUMA's or SARM's. But her words were, if you could reduce the labour on municipal labour, that their revenues would go up, is what . . . I think that was what was said.

And that's a pretty tough one to figure out because I think what we should probably do is just go back, you know. The member is saying it's not enough, even though it's record amounts in all our social programs — health care, social services, and education — record amounts, and it's just not enough. But a record amount of municipal revenue sharing and that's not enough.

And you know, I could go back a very long time because it's been kept track of as far as the history of revenue sharing in this province was. So if you think 14.2 per cent is not enough, I'm not sure what you would have thought, you know, in 2004 and '05. Well actually in 2006 and '07 it was a negative 1.1 per cent. Like there was no predictability. There was no . . . Municipalities had no idea what would be coming from the government at the time.

And you know, once we became government and put in the municipal revenue sharing, other than the one year, I think pretty much it has proven pretty successful. Overall in fact I don't know if the municipalities would want to change the program. They may want to change the PST program but not the municipal revenue-sharing program, because frankly after the budget I heard a lot of . . . And I could kind of go back and read a number of articles where municipalities were pretty happy with the allotment through Government Relations, which is the ministry that I'm responsible for.

You know, social services, it impacts municipalities, and so does health care and so does education. But the area that we're responsible for is the municipal revenue-sharing program. I don't think you'd hear too many complaints from the municipal sector.

**The Chair:** — Ms. Ritchie, I'd also caution you again to stick toward Government Relations estimates and not to social services, health care, and other ones. We have had other committees that have done the estimates on those, and please stick to Government Relations estimates.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — So, Mr. McMorris, as the Minister for Government Relations, with that direct responsibility for municipal affairs and interacting with leaders of those communities and setting the municipal revenue-sharing funding amounts, I will go back to that point in terms of that is the context in which I'm asking you those questions.

And I do have a couple examples where I've heard that areas such as solid waste management, contaminated sites, and STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service] are examples where municipalities are struggling to meet the increased costs associated with those programs. Obviously solid waste management is directly within the responsibility of municipalities. And as I'm sure you're aware, you know, there's been increasing expectations and requirements in terms of the management and upkeep of those municipal services. STARS is



another area where there's, you know, additional costs.

Is it accurate and correct to say that those are areas that are adding additional municipal costs for this level of government?

[15:30]

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I'll start with the one that I really don't have any answer for and I'd like if you could maybe supply some more information on STARS. I was there when we set it up. I don't remember municipalities, unless they so choose. Some do; some don't. Some community foundations get involved and they'll put up a landing pad. I know I was in Fort Qu'Appelle this morning and they're opening a new — eventually — groundbreaking for a new community clinic, and it just happens to be about 100 yards from the landing pad. So I'm not very familiar at all with municipalities' responsibilities towards STARS unless they so choose.

On the solid waste piece is kind of where for the most part your question, I think, went. And there's really kind of two areas on the solid waste piece. The one area is kind of the infrastructure of, you know, handling whether it's landfills and the decommissioning of landfills through the ICIP program. We decommissioned a number of landfills. For some reason 17 comes to mind, but I could be off on that a little bit. But money's gone towards communities to decommission because of the threat that it had, those landfills would have towards groundwater and that type of thing. So that's why that was done. It was more on an environmental perspective. Some of the landfills had gone past their best-before date.

And so roughly about \$108 million, \$109 million has been put towards solid waste management, and that usually is infrastructure. It's not operational. Operational is the responsibility of the cities or communities, which then goes on the tax base. That's part of the property tax. When a person pays property tax, that goes towards . . . I mean there's an education portion obviously goes to education, but when a municipality charges . . . When I pay my property tax in the RM of North Qu'Appelle, I get garbage pickup. Part of my taxes goes towards garbage pickup and that's the same in every municipality. And so, you know, that is . . . I'll just leave it at that. That's part of their property tax piece. So you know, there has been work done on the solid waste management.

When you get into kind of regulations and what is expected of that, that would be more Environment. We don't have any say in that. But that would be kind of more on the environmental side. But having said that, you know, a lot of money's gone into ICIP and when it's on the operational side, then that becomes part of the municipality through property tax.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you, Mr. McMorris. With respect to capital funding for landfills, decommissioning, etc., you mentioned a number that GR [Government Relations] has contributed alongside of ICIP towards those capital investments. In terms of the budget before us here today, how much money is there earmarked for municipal landfills, whether that's decommissioning or new construction? And I suspect you're going to make mention of the devolution of the ICIP program and sort of what your ministerial reaction or response is going to be to that.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So over the past . . . well since 2018 and going out to 2033 — boy that's a long time out there, 2033 — but we'll have decommissioned over 70 landfills. And just on that program alone is \$106 million for decommissioning, \$106 million which is provincial, federal, and municipal totals combined. And this year alone, just on ICIP, is 271 million that will be going out in ICIP funding this year. That's just for the whole overall ICIP program. And this one, the over 70 landfills with 106 million, is over the length of the program, 2018 to 2033.

You asked a question that I probably can't answer very well on the housing piece. And I'd be very interested to know what you heard at SARM and especially SUMA because there's getting to be a little more information coming out on any sort of ICIP program moving forward, and it seems to only be focused around housing.

I told the delegates — and I'm sure you were there — I told the delegates when I had an opportunity to address an FPT [federal-provincial-territorial] a number of months ago, federal-provincial-territorial meeting, I said housing is important, but I can name an awful lot of communities that isn't their priority and how important it is that the ICIP money for the most part came with fewer strings attached than what we're going to see moving forward. There was too many strings still in some cases.

That's why I think if you were to talk to every municipality, MRS, municipal revenue sharing — I hate to come back to it — is so welcome, because if they want to put it towards solid waste management, they can. We have no strings attached as to where that . . . If they want to put it all towards housing, they can.

It's strictly their money to do whatever they want, but when you enter into a three-way agreement with the federal government and the municipalities, the federal government tends to lay down rules as to where it wants to see the money go. And right now housing is definitely their priority. It wouldn't be the priority across Saskatchewan, but it is the federal priority on all their programs — even the gas tax, which used to be no strings attached.

So you've heard the municipalities come out lobbying the federal government, complaining to the federal government that that Canada Community-Building Fund, formerly known as the gas tax, used to have few or no strings attached and now it's going to have to go towards housing. And you know, depending on the community — I can think of a number of communities in my constituency — that is not their priority at all. They have other priorities, and it's a little frustrating.

Same with any . . . whether it's a reiteration of ICIP, which it won't be because it's just so narrowed. What we said . . . And I met with the federal minister O'Regan last Friday, a week ago Friday I guess it was, in Saskatoon. And we were talking about labour issues which I'm . . . He's the minister responsible and so am I. So we had that conversation and I made mention to him that, housing, okay, but it's got to be more than just vertical. It's got to be horizontal. It's got to be infrastructure. It's got to be wastewater. It's got to be clean drinking water. It's got to be all that, and it can't just be new build. And he was . . . You know, I mean he's not the minister responsible but he could certainly understand that, because you can't expect a whole bunch of communities to build housing units without any water or sewer

going to them.

But that doesn't look like that's acceptable, and at least it's got to be new builds. When you know what Saskatchewan, with our infrastructure . . . And it was the same. He's from Newfoundland, and many small communities around St. John's are in the same position. They put in water and sewer decades ago and their population isn't able to keep up with the expense. And that's why, you know, okay housing, but it's got to be more than just building up. It's got to be infrastructure under the ground.

So we're still learning on the housing possible program moving forward. I know Sheldon is meeting relatively soon with the federal deputy ministers, and so we'll be learning more. The announcement was made with very little detail, and I think you heard every province and every community, every . . . Pretty much any municipality that I talked to wanted to know really what was in the program because they didn't release any of it. And so it's pretty hard to have an opinion too written in stone until you know all the details of the program, but what we've heard so far is concerning. And those concerns have been raised over and over again with the federal government.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — And thank you, Mr. Minister. I can concur based on my own conversations with municipal leaders at SARM, at SUMA, what I heard over and over again was that there was an increasing need for infrastructure funding to replace and improve that existing infrastructure in our towns and other communities.

So you know, I'm well aware that Saskatchewan has unique needs that don't maybe match up with the federal government's priorities around, you know, sort of funding municipal projects. Obviously it's different in our larger urban centres than other communities.

But on the question of, you know, the infrastructure demands — water, sewer, roads, those sorts of things — can you tell me how your ministry is tracking those needs within Saskatchewan communities and what the current needs are right now in dollar amounts? And are you able to provide sort of a historic account of those amounts going back 10 years, and where you project them as we move forward?

[15:45]

**Mr. Green:** — Good afternoon. Sheldon Green, acting deputy minister of Government Relations and for First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs. Thank you for that question around the infrastructure deficit. It's very difficult to try and quantify what an infrastructure deficit would look like.

In many communities they may have assets on their books that are fully functioning today but they may be fully depreciated, as an example. Or in other cases, they may have depreciating assets that aren't intended to be replaced; perhaps they've become obsolete for whatever reason. So it's a challenge nationally to do that, to try to provide quantification of the deficit. We've been focusing on trying to encourage municipalities to do better asset management planning. That's been a big focus of the Canada Community-Building Fund over more than a decade now under that program.

And officials are regularly, as well, encouraging communities to

take a look at how they manage themselves doing the planning for the long term of the assets that, in many cases, were putting a capital contribution in through ICIP. And then hopefully they're going to do their proper asset management and then chip away at their infrastructure deficit. Cities do a tremendous job of that, most larger municipalities.

We've also been funding a number of asset management projects in rural municipalities through our targeted sector support initiative program. The latest round of projects that we approved — 800,000 just in recent months and there is an intake open again now — but in that last round there were a number of projects where groups of rural municipalities, for example, were working together to improve their asset management capabilities through GIS [geographic information system] mapping of all of their roadways, bridges, and so forth.

I think also the ministry has been working with Ministry of Environment, SaskWater, SaskBuilds and Procurement, Ministry of Highways on having a good handle on the programming that intersects with them, that has bits and pieces of municipal infrastructure related to it, with the intent that when new federal programming that's coming down — and we're just starting to hear a little bit more of it now — that we'll maybe be able to connect into that.

For example, under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, we notionally carved out and worked with Environment a \$50 million fund that was announced in June of 2020, and that was specifically toward solid waste. But we also worked closely with Ministry of Highways through their rural integrated roads for growth program, and segued some funding from ICIP so that we could do more bridges on the rural side. We had a target of close to 100 and we met that target with those rural municipalities.

And so it's certainly on our mind about watching where federal programming might come to intersect and connect in with the infrastructure needs that we know communities have. But on quantifying deficit, it's a challenge to do that.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Appreciate that it's challenging. So how do you overcome that limitation? Are you relying on some sort of estimates or surrogate data? How do you work around that?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you. I guess there's a couple of things I want to raise regarding where and what the community should be doing as far as their assets and their infrastructure.

The first I'm going to mention, and I've mentioned it at both SARM and SUMA, is the targeted sector support which is 1.5 million that comes off the overall pool of municipal revenue sharing. There are two intakes a year for targeted sector support. And communities have to combine with another community — whether it's an RM and town; whether it's a town and town; RM to RM; RM, town, and First Nation — that can look at many different . . .

The money is . . . it says targeted sector. It's targeted, but it's also pretty general that they could kind of combine as to what is the asset level in a region kind of, and what could be done. You're seeing a little bit more and more. A number of communities go together for fresh water instead of each having their own plant,

and I mean those are . . . It takes a lot of work for communities to get to that co-operation level, and the targeted sector support is money there to have communities work together on different avenues, but specific to your question.

When it gets into asset management though . . . And that's why we're encouraging communities to look at and review their asset management. We do as a provincial government. We have our own assets. We have highways. We have health care. We have education. Those are all the asset management that we have to do and we're encouraging communities to certainly do their own.

I know there's probably not a lot of RMs that don't know which bridge needs to replace next and which gravel road needs to have a clay base and gravel put down. They're doing that, and with the urbans it would be the same thing. And how important it is to have those kind of priorities or asset management laid out so that, you know, when it comes to municipal revenue sharing where there are no strings attached, instead of putting it to something that maybe is perhaps needed — you know, whether it's a hall or recreation facility — and ignoring the deficit they have, whether it's wastewater or fresh water. So really encouraging communities to do that.

I don't really see it as a provincial government's responsibility to manage the assets of a community. That's why they're elected. They're, you know, a government unto their own and those are the responsibilities they take on as a community, and that's where their tax base goes to. And that's where we help out when we can through ICIP programs and that type of thing. But I would say that we do know, through any of the intakes that we've had regarding the ICIP program, there's always more ask than there is money. As the former premier always said, there's always more fence than there is paint.

So we know there's deficit out there and communities are looking for help. And that's why, you know, any time we get a chance, and I would encourage the members opposite to talk to their federal counterparts that . . . infrastructure, infrastructure. But don't tie it to one specific thing because it doesn't match everybody. Give the communities the leeway to take those infrastructure dollars and put it to what they think is best through asset management, which they are strongly encouraged to do.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — So thank you for that answer. Just to be clear though, is what you're saying that you're not tracking the infrastructure deficit or relying on any other kind of indicators to provide you with estimates? Like I would expect that within your policy shop that would be a priority for them to understand sort of the scope and scale of the pressures, and that such information would be vital for developing budgets like the one we see here today. So I mean just wanting to clarify, I guess, in the absence of actual direct tracking, what are you relying on to understand what that scale and scope is?

[16:00]

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So I think, to the member's question, it's kind of, I think it's a tough one to answer. I think you're expecting that government has a number tucked away that this is what all the infrastructure deficit is in the province, and we don't. Municipalities are autonomous organizations that have the responsibility of governing on certain levels — it's called the

divisions of powers — on certain levels of what they're responsible for, and they're responsible for their infrastructure.

And so it wouldn't . . . We know that there's an infrastructure deficit out there because by design of the programs, when there's more wants for water and sewer than there is money from the program, we know that's a big want. And that's why we continue to carry the torch to the federal government: instead of just lumping it all into housing, let's continue on the track that we've been on over the last number of years to address many more of these communities.

And some communities are, you know, they're in the position where they get federal-provincial money. Some communities have gone on their own. They've worked with SaskWater and they've worked with different organizations to address the infrastructure, which is their responsibility. It isn't the provincial government's responsibility. And that's why I think . . . Again I'll go back to municipal revenue sharing is so important. Here is \$340.2 million to the municipal sector to spend as you see fit because you know best — it's your community — as opposed to us dictating to them as to what they should spend it on.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Well I think in the interests of time, we'll leave that discussion and move on to Capital Commission. We might come back to this line of questioning, but I do want to respect that request.

So I notice in the budget that last year there was money for, I think it was Conexus, Centre of the Arts and I'm wondering if you could tell me, or provide a list of capital projects that were completed during last year's fiscal and the amounts, and what you have on the books for the current year?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I'll start with the first question which was regarding Conexus and the 750,000 I think the number was thrown out. And then I'll turn it over to Jenna who can go through the capital, kind of what we've done and maybe what we're planning on doing into the future and give you more detail on that than I certainly would be able to.

On the Conexus, of course, COVID was so devastating to all of those venues that we were able to put \$750,000 for two years, through COVID, to get them through that period because there was very few or no concerts, and the Christmas season which they so heavily rely on was shut down. Since then they've got back on their feet.

It's a very strong board with strong management. Really impressed with the work that they do and what they've done and they're back on their feet working to get to a profit where they were before COVID. They are making a profit at Conexus. And it's again through the undertakings of the board and the management that has got them there. I mean, they're very good.

They have a great Christmas season with Christmas parties. Those were starting to come back this past year. Of course they have the one concert that everybody . . . no, I shouldn't say everybody. I'm not sure in Melfort whether you know of Shake the Lake, but there's the Shake the Lake concert. And you know, that has been a good money-maker for them. And they've got a great lineup going forward. As well as then all the other areas that they bring in revenue, and have bounced back as well as

anybody could have after COVID. And you know, I think we were very fortunate that we could help them along through those lean times, but they're working hard to get back on the profit side of the ledger and are doing a great job.

As far as all the different projects within the Provincial Capital Commission, I'll turn it over to Jenna. If you want to just maybe state your name and your position.

**Ms. Schroeder:** — Thank you, Minister, and thank you for the question. My name is Jenna Schroeder. I'm the executive director for the Provincial Capital Commission. And thank you for the question about the capital projects.

We do have a pretty significant portion of our budget every year that's allocated to capital works within Wascana Centre and at Government House. So for last year we had a budget of, I believe, \$1.85 million that was allocated towards capital.

Some of the projects that we have, I've got a listing here. We did some picnic site upgrades. The budget for that was 15,000. A shoreline management plan, the budget was 53,000. Lighting upgrades within Wascana Centre, that budget was 280,000. Our orchard that we have by our forestry depot, that budget was 15,000. The wayfinding signage throughout Wascana Centre, we budgeted \$240,000 for that.

Pathway accessibility initiative, we had budgeted 131,000. An aeration study, the budget was 105,000. Invasive species and wildlife management, that budget was 11,000. Alternate ground cover, the budget was 10,000. For the Wascana Centre master plan, our budget was 175,000. For the aeration planning and design, that budget was 50,000. Prairie habitat restoration and conservation management, budget of 40,000.

Queen Elizabeth II east lawn repair, our budget was 80,000. We had a budget of 33,000 for a Pine Island walk repair. 22,000 was allocated for the interpretive centre at Government House. Shoreline management restoration was budgeted at \$375,000. We had deferred a project on Douglas Park rehabilitation design, but that budget was 25,000. For pedestrian counts, we had a budget of 50,000. And then we did a pathway assessment as well and that budget was \$26,000. That was for last fiscal year.

For this fiscal year, I've got the different categories of the projects. So I'll give you the categories, some of the projects, and then what that budget was for the total category.

Maintenance of event spaces, the total budget is \$148,000 and we've got three projects in it. Some work on Willow Island. We'll do some design for the Lady Slipper Courtyard, and then we also have to finish up the Queen Elizabeth II East Lawn and gardens restoration. It's a carry-over from last year. We had started the work and ran out of time with the winter.

In the category of maintenance of landscape features, that total budget is \$337,300. And the projects that are in that are alternate ground cover; our orchard, targeted grazing, and urban forestry management plan; Pine Island remediation and design; the Queen Building retaining wall; Trafalgar outlook assessment; shoreline restoration design; shoreline vegetation; and the Legislative Building hedge replacement. Under maintenance of park amenities, the total budget is \$151,000, and that'll be

allocated towards picnic site rejuvenation and maintenance.

The biggest ticket item that we have this year is for our pathways and washroom renewal plan. The total budget is \$1.36 million. That will be allocated to a combination of pathway projects and then maintaining public washrooms. And then for signage, wayfinding signage project, we're allocating \$100,000 to that. And then we have a few other initiatives. The total is \$85,000, and that's replacement of the [wascana.ca](http://wascana.ca) website, portable evaporative coolers for our greenhouse, and the Government House interpretive centre.

So the total for '24-25 is \$2.185 million for capital projects.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — It's my understanding . . . Thank you for that listing. I understand that there's been — and you might have mentioned it in one of the items — some Tyndall stone signs that have been erected. Which of those projects did that fall under, and what was the amount?

**Ms. Schroeder:** — Yeah, thank you for that question. The Tyndall stone goes on our wayfinding signage project. So for this past year we were working on phase 3, and those are the title signs that are around Wascana Centre. So you'll see a big, blue sign with white lettering. They're all lit up or they're in the process of being lit up, and they have Tyndall stone bases. So it's under the wayfinding signage budget, and for last year the budget for that project was \$240,000.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you for that answer. Back, I guess it was in 2022, the Brandt company had filed a lawsuit against the province over taking over the CNIB [Canadian National Institute for the Blind] building. The province settled out of court for \$11.6 million. And was that money that came out of the Capital Commission budget? And how were funds redirected to cover that cost?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you for that. So the whole piece around the CNIB was all handled through SaskBuilds. So any appropriation that was made would be through SaskBuilds. They looked after that whole file.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — And so what was the Capital Commission's involvement in the original initiative to install Brandt in the former CNIB building, and what were the cost implications of that?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — That was all a number of years previous. We don't have that in our budget.

[16:15]

**Ms. Ritchie:** — But as you say, the settlement was in 2022 and the Capital Commission was named in that original lawsuit. So there must have been some involvement by the Capital Commission in the settlement of that claim and that out-of-court settlement. Can you tell me how the Capital Commission was working with SaskBuilds to reach a deal?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So further to my previous answer is that that was again handled by SaskBuilds. They were the lead on it. That was finished in the previous fiscal year. We don't have any information on it or will be answering any questions on what

happened two and three years ago.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — And just this too, I do want to sort of correct the record. So that settlement was reached in July of 2023 according to reports, so it's within the last annual report cycle for the Capital Commission. So based on that, I would just ask the question again. What role did the Capital Commission play in the settlement of that dispute and the cost implications for that fiscal year?

**The Chair:** — Yeah, I would ask, Ms. Ritchie, you please . . . That is part of SaskBuilds. That's not part of this. He answered that portion. Please move on.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Oh, okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just seeking some clarity from the minister sort of with that corrected information of the settlement being reached in the last fiscal year of 2023.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yeah, I would just again suggest you talk to the Minister of SaskBuilds. We're defending the '24-25 budget.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you to the officials. I don't have any further questions for the Provincial Capital Commission.

I'll go back to where we left off prior to those questions. I think, you know, admittedly we're sort of treading some old ground from last year in terms of the ongoing matters, issues, concerns within Government Relations. So you mentioned 1.5 million for targeted sector support, and there were two intakes for the . . . And again, I'll go back to the last fiscal year. I think I'm within my right to be asking questions about monies spent in the last fiscal year and how they relate to the budget for the current year, if that's my understanding.

So the question would be, can you provide a list of projects that received funding from the targeted sector support? Was the full amount disbursed? And when will the intakes happen for this year's allotment?

**Mr. Green:** — Thank you for that question. The two intakes in '23-24 and listing of those projects . . . The intake from winter of 2023 was a total of \$713,740 were allocated, and the projects . . . And I'll name the lead applicant, and then every applicant is required to have at least a minimum of a partner community, and I can tell you a little bit more of each.

So from the first intake, it was the RM of Canwood. It had 10 partners to do a project titled A Contract: A Regional Emergency Measures Organization Specialist, and it was under our regional co-operation stream. The funding amount was \$54,525 which would have represented 75 per cent of their costs of the project.

The town of Radisson, it had had one partner, and it was building administrative capacity through regional co-operation, and it was a \$7,500 project. Resort village of Cochin had three partners, feasibility study on Lehman Creek bridge replacement removal under the regional co-operation stream, and that was a total funding amount of 75,000. RM of Mankota No. 45 had a partner to do a combined digital safety manual under regional co-operation for \$6,968.25.

Town of Qu'Appelle had two partners to facilitate, create, and implement a regional governance structure entity to manage the new regional water project. And that was under our capacity-building stream, and that was funded at 75,000. The RM of Moose Creek No. 33 had three partners, and it was the southeast Saskatchewan municipal collaborative asset management mapping project, under capacity-building stream for 41,250.

Town of Redvers had three partners working together on a feasibility study for the Redvers and District Recreation Centre under the regional co-operation stream for \$43,295.25. The RM of Meadow Lake No. 588 had three partners, and they updated their existing emergency measures operation plan and developed a regional response plan for floods and wildfires, and that was under the regional co-operation stream for \$36,976.50.

Then we had the RM of Piapot No. 110 had four partners to do a southwest municipal road network and tangible capital asset GIS mapping project under capacity building for \$50,625 of funding. RM of Turtle River No. 469 had three partners, and it was the northwest municipalities collaborative asset management mapping project, under capacity-building stream for funding of \$41,250. The RM of Edenwold No. 158 had nine partners, and it was to support conflict management training for municipal staff through the Resolving Conflict Constructively workshop under capacity building, and that was \$7,500.

Town of Gull Lake had two partners exploring regional resource sharing, regional water project scope development, and procurement of engineering consultant services. And that was under regional co-operation for \$15,600 in funding. Northern hamlet of St. George's Hill had one partner, and it was a regional co-operation feasibility study for treated water under regional co-operation for \$67,500 in funding.

RM of Antelope Park No. 322 had five partners and they did the prairie winds emergency planning district emergency response plan and training project, under regional co-operation for \$56,250. Village of Muenster had one partner, regional land use feasibility study including updates to land use planning tools, and that was under the capacity-building stream for \$34,500. And village of Englefeld had three partners and they did the EQWL [Englefeld, Quill Lake, Watson, and Lakeside] regional partnership, and that was a \$100,000 project.

That was the first intake. And the second intake, the total allocation approved was \$803,648.48. And those projects included . . . The RM of St. Louis No. 431 had a partner, one partner, and that was the fire department operations manual to comply with the fire service minimum standards guide, under capacity-building stream for \$26,250. City of Melville had one partner to do a feasibility study for regional potable water supply, under our regional co-operation stream for \$48,375.

Town of Watson had 10 partners and they're working on a regional emergency management program under the regional co-operation stream, and that was \$100,000 in funding. Village of Stenen had one partner and it was intermunicipal emergency management, under the regional co-operation stream for \$5,250. The town of Osler had four partners and they undertook an intermunicipal strategic plan, under the regional co-operation stream for \$43,800.

Town of Kyle had one partner, urban and rural asset management, and that was under the capacity-building stream for \$52,500. The RM of Lajord No. 128 had one partner and it was for governance training, and it was under the regional co-operation stream for \$1,500. The RM of Reciprocity No. 32 had nine partners and the project was the southeast Saskatchewan municipal engagement and asset management platform project, and that was under regional co-operation for 93,750.

The RM of Eye Hill No 382 had four partners and they're working on the northwest Saskatchewan municipal engagement and asset mapping platform project, and that was under the capacity-building stream for \$93,750. The RM of Kindersley No. 290 had four partners and they are working on the central Saskatchewan municipal engagement and asset mapping platform project, under the regional co-operation stream for 93,750.

The town of Eston had one partner undertaking a joint emergency measures plan under the regional co-operation stream for \$6,000; town of Rose Valley had two partners, intermunicipal emergency plan and capacity under the regional co-operation stream for \$39,000; RM of Emerald No. 277 had three partners to do a collaborative adoption of an official plan, zoning, and building bylaw for neighbouring communities, regional co-operation stream, for \$53,081.25; RM of Milton No. 292 had two partners and they're doing a feasibility study for the creation of a municipal district, and that's under the municipal transition stream for \$56,250.

The RM of Montmartre No. 126 had one partner for development of a combined digital safety manual, and that was under the regional co-operation stream for \$6,542.59. The village of Elbow had one partner to do a feasibility study on a sewer lagoon pumping station and force main upgrades, and that was under the regional co-operation stream for \$53,850. And the RM of Meota No. 468 had four partners and they're working on a regional community safety officer and implementation plan under the regional co-operation stream for \$30,000. And that concludes the two intakes that were just, the last one just completed.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I would just add that this is a great program in that we turn the money over to SUMA directly and they administer the program with SARM and the New North. We have a representative on the board to select . . . but it's not we at Government Relations selecting where this money goes. It's SUMA, driven by their members, SARM, New North, and we do have somebody on the board.

There's another intake that's open right now and it will close as of June the 7th.

[16:30]

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you for that comprehensive list. Now I understand that there is an initiative called the municipal-Indigenous partnership that is working to encourage federal and provincial governments to work with urban Indigenous organizations to encourage regional co-operation. Can you provide examples of where this co-operation has occurred and whether any of these targeted sector support projects reflect that

co-operation?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — We'll answer this, we'll tag team on this one. The one program that you mentioned about Indigenous municipal, that's run through FCM, Federation of Canadian Municipalities. So that's run through them. So we don't have anything to do with that at all. In fact Sheldon had never really heard of it operating in Saskatchewan at all. So with that, I will turn it over to Sheldon for the programs that we fund directly.

**Mr. Green:** — Thank you for that question. There are a number of First Nations communities that are participating in TSS projects, or targeted sector support initiative projects, with their municipal neighbours.

The city of Meadow Lake is . . . I'm assuming it's complete. The projects, I'm not sure whether they're exactly complete yet or not, but they did a feasibility study and facilitation for a regional fire and emergency services in their neighbouring First Nation. Flying Dust was one of the partners in the project.

The RM of Corman Park did some work on their community planning side with a southeast concept plan, working with English River First Nation and Cowessess First Nation as well were in that concept plan area. And there was a second project that the RM of Corman Park did during the life of the program so far on the south . . . They did the southeast concept plan and then an southern RM concept plan. And it was the same First Nations were involved, in addition to Fishing Lake First Nation.

The northern town of Creighton did a sportsplex upgrades feasibility study. And that project I believe is complete, and Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation was one of the partners into that project. The town of Whitewood undertook a partnership project, and Kahkewistahaw First Nation was a part of that. The town of La Ronge was the applicant for a fire department strategic plan and fire service agreement, and the Lac La Ronge Indian Band was one of the partners for that project.

The city of North Battleford led a project doing a regional emergency management plan development, and the regional First Nations including the Battle River community coalition were part of that project. The town of Maple Creek did a joint emergency plan project which I think is maybe just getting close to being finished and it's with Nekaneet First Nation. The town of Fort Qu'Appelle undertook a project with partnering discussions. They explored opportunities for improved and sustainable joint service delivery, and that was with the Treaty 4 governance bands.

The northern hamlet of St. George's Hill is undertaking a regional co-operation feasibility study for treated water, and that's with the Buffalo River Dene Nation. And the resort village of Cochin feasibility study on the Lehman Creek bridge replacement and removal included the Moosomin First Nation and Saulteaux First Nation.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you again for those examples, or that list. I guess I'm just a little curious to know, you know, given that that is an FCM initiative, what the ministry's policies and initiatives are to promote co-operation between Indigenous communities and neighbouring municipalities. Or is there anything explicit at all?

**Mr. Leibel:** — Good afternoon. My name is Ralph Leibel. I'm the executive director for community planning branch and acting assistant deputy minister currently.

So as part of the planning process, we've incorporated into *The Statements of Provincial Interest Regulations*, which is part of *The Planning and Development Act*, policies that municipalities would incorporate into their official community plans and zoning bylaws. And through that process, they're sending policies to engage First Nations and Métis communities in their community land use planning development and certainly trying to engage in them. There's urban reserves as well that are available to municipalities. And this has been since 2012 when *The Statements of Provincial Interest Regulations* were adopted.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — And I think what we'll do is I'll just get Giselle to talk a little bit about some of the supports that we have. Ralph talked about the policy through provincial interest and Giselle will talk about some of the supports that we have in that area.

**Ms. Marcotte:** — Good afternoon. Giselle Marcotte, assistant deputy minister, Government Relations. I just wanted to mention an example recently in '23-24 with our community partnerships grants, our First Nations-Métis community partnerships grants, where we provided \$45,000 to the Battleford regional coalition comprised of the town and the city and surrounding First Nations on a Battlefords regional anti-racism project.

So that's an example of where one of our grants can support that collaboration between municipalities and First Nations and Métis communities as well. And those grants are available to municipalities if they're working with First Nations, First Nations if they're working with municipalities about partnerships and collaboration.

And another example: there hasn't been any dollars asked for this yet but another area that we have worked with First Nations and municipalities, with them when there's a road crossing through a reserve, where we would promote that collaboration and the conversation about how to keep them maintained.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Okay. So you mentioned the Battleford coalition and a \$45,000 grant. So how much money in total was expended for such initiatives in last year's budget? And how much is set aside in this year's budget?

**Ms. Marcotte:** — Okay. Thank you for the question. Last year in the First Nations-Métis community partnerships projects we expended a total of 291,049.

There were nine recipients: Northern Lights School Division on land-based education; growing youth movers youth development, Moving for Change, a G.Y.M. [Growing Young Movers] Indigenous mentorship programming; Muskoday First Nation elders alliance against violence; city of Saskatoon reconciliation learning series; Balcarres community school, Prairie Valley School Division on sharing our stories and bridging the generational gap; Battleford Regional Community Coalition as I mentioned; Yorkton Tribal Council about improving safety for Indigenous people in rural Saskatchewan; Gabriel Dumont Local 11 Michif traditional parenting; and the YWCA Regina, cultural resurgence and reconciliation through

ceremony at the YWCA.

For '24-25 we have \$300,000 set aside for the community partnerships projects.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you. Of that, you mentioned \$291,000 last year. How many grant applications did you receive in total? And was there a dollar amount attached to that full amount that was applied for?

[16:45]

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So the program was well subscribed, obviously. We had nine, I believe, projects. We had a total budget of 300,000; 291 roughly was expended.

There may have been other applications that didn't meet the criteria because there are some criteria that they'd have to meet, such as partnering and, yeah, First Nations and Métis as well. So some of that criteria may not have been met. And there could be some applicants that weren't successful, but we can endeavour to get more information if you want to go down this further.

As I said, we had nine projects that were funded for a total of \$291,049. That isn't the full budget because we had 300,000. But perhaps we can look at, endeavour as I said, endeavour to get some more information if you want to go down there further.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — No, I guess what I was just really wanting to understand was the scale of the interest in the program, the need for these kinds of grants, and how much would sort of carry over to a future year and have to be maybe re-scoped to sort of meet the requirements for the grant application. So I don't know if you can say anything further in that regard. That's all I would ask.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Just looking at some of the criteria, it is quite open, you know. There's four bullets here: safe community, stronger families, student achievement, economic growth. And then it gets into some of the more specifics. But they do have to have a partner, and that's very important.

If there are some organizations that you know of that feel that the criteria is too stringent, we'd like to hear from them, either through you or directly. And we're always looking to improve these programs. Our goal is not to withhold money. If there's money set out for these programs and there's organizations that can utilize it, we want to make sure that they are understanding of the criteria that we have so that we can move the money out the door to help them in their projects.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you. I'm wondering, Mr. McMorris, if you could explain to me the role that the Ministry of Government Relations takes in the sort of government-of-whole response in adapting to climate change.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thanks for the question. And when you first asked it, I was kind of wondering what my answer would be. But I turned around and found three really good answers.

Whether it's building code . . . And Bill Hawkins just was talking to me as far as the building code and some of the other initiatives through that part of the ministry. He can certainly talk to you on that. Jenna Schroeder from the Provincial Capital Commission

also has a number of things that could talk about on climate change and what we're doing within the Provincial Capital Commission to address some of those issues. As well as Ralph Leibel could talk from community planning on, again, a bit of a provincial . . . the statement of provincial interest.

So I don't know which area you want to go on. Or I could bring all three up at a different time to talk about what they're doing on this very factor which, you know, I guess Government Relations is the ministry overlooking all of those initiatives.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Perhaps we could start with provincial statements of interest then.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Sure.

**Mr. Leibel:** — And thank you for the question. The statements of provincial interest, I don't have the section off the top of my mind right now, but there's a section in there that talks about municipalities considering climate change factors and issues. And what's important is that *The Statements of Provincial Interest Regulations* are policy regulations. They're not specific standards. So they're very flexible to allow the municipality, when they're reviewing their official community plans and zoning bylaws, to consider climate change practices and policies to develop and incorporate into their plans and bylaws.

Those bylaws are submitted in to the ministry, the official community plans when they're adopted, for review. And we ensure compliance with *The Statements of Provincial Interest Regulations*. And so we're looking for different policies that they may incorporate as their municipalities.

Of course they vary depending on the municipality and the consultants or the planners and engineers in their communities on how they develop them. But generally they're overall high-level policies that they can then look at incorporating within their development decisions and within their engineering and planning decisions within their communities. And so they're developing them individually within their own municipality.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — And how do you, or do you track the development of such bylaws and development plans? Like, is there a tracking mechanism? You put these policies out and they're there to guide the work of the municipalities. But I'm just wondering, you know, how does that work at the ground level?

**Mr. Leibel:** — At the ground level, when we receive a new official community plan, our team reviews the plan for all the 16 statements that are in *The Statements of Provincial Interest Regulations*, and check to make sure that they're incorporated into the bylaw where applicable.

What's important to appreciate is that the statements are insofar as practical given the circumstances of that particular municipality. So for example, if a municipality does not have a railway going through their municipality, they certainly wouldn't need to have railway policies in place because the likelihood of a railway going in there just would not be a likelihood.

There are times when a municipality doesn't incorporate certain interests because of their particular circumstance. But for climate change matters, it involves different things like flood protection

and hazard lands and development of that nature. And we actually have a specific section in *The Planning and Development Act* that speaks to restricting or prohibiting development from occurring within the floodway of a river or lake system. And we use the 1 in 500 flood event level, which is the highest standard, and that's to try and save people some of their biggest losses. It affects so many people when flooding occurs.

Through these bylaws, where there's some significant issues, we'll refer them out to the various agencies. So an official community plan could be circulated out to Ministry of Environment for their review on the policies, Ministry of Agriculture, Water Security Agency, to the utilities, Energy and Resources if there's oil and gas issues that are having to be considered in the municipality.

So it's a broad review that can occur. Most of the standards within the statements of provincial interest, we've gotten and received what those provincial ministries would like to see incorporated into official community plans. So then the team checks with those ministries or already has the understanding to be able to say yes, that one meets the statements of provincial interest requirement. And so each municipality looks at how climate change can affect them.

As well, I just want to add one more point, if you don't mind, and that is official community plans are to be prepared by professional licensed planners of Saskatchewan. And they, under their own licensing requirements, are required to take into consideration climate change. And that's being practised across Canada, both within Saskatchewan and Canada.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you for that response. I'm just wondering if you could give me some examples of what one would see in the provincial statements of interest with respect to climate change and adaptation.

**Mr. Leibel:** — Probably the most important one is the flooding, where they have requirements for flood protection and flood fringe development. That's one of the most critical ones because it is changing the elevations as Water Security develops new hydrology information. The estimates in some cases are higher than what they may have been in the past.

So over the years you've seen the standard flood protection, for example, being a 1 in 25 flood event level, so it reach a certain elevation, percentage-wise. And it moved from that to 1 in 100, to where we applied the standard 1 in 500 since the 2012 statements. And that's a 10 per cent chance of flooding every 50 years that you can have two events of a 1 in 500 risk assessment two years in a row.

[17:00]

So we've seen more flooding over the years from 2010 to '14, over that five-year period — some significant floods. And the municipalities recognize the importance of using those standards, given the climate change and the downpours that have occurred.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — So if, as you say, the standards have been shifting to where they're now 1 in 500, what does that mean in terms of infrastructure? You know, residential housing,



commercial stock, municipal buildings. Like what is the liability that is currently on the books based on these updated values?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Okay, I'll start and then I'll probably pass it over to Ralph to add anything or . . . Yeah.

And the reason why I do want to have a little bit of a conversation in this area is because I represent Fort Qu'Appelle and the lakes — Pasqua, Echo, Mission, and Katepwa — and so been called out to a number of meetings, both in Fort Qu'Appelle as well as Lebret. And Lebret, even though it's not in my constituency, as GR, we went out and met with the town council.

And it all boils down to development, and with the mapping and the changes in mapping, and certainly the flood in 2011 had a huge influence on mapping going forward into 2012 as Ralph mentioned. And communities are working with the changing levels, I guess.

As far as liability, ultimately it boils down to whoever issued the permit. In other words, if you want to build here, they want to build there, and if a municipality or a regional planning area — which, you know, we recommend because it's better if it's kind of in a regional planning area — if they issued a permit, then the liability then tends to rest on whoever issued the permit.

We can help them through the Water Security Agency mainly — and again I don't want to get into answering questions for the Water Security Agency — but certainly help them with their decision-making process. But as far as tracking liability moving forward, that would not be us. And as far as us recommending on liability issues, that wouldn't be us as well. We can give them the mapping and what other areas have done working with the Water Security Agency, but I would advise any municipality to have legal counsel when it gets to the liability piece.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — So I guess, I mean this all ties back to the provincial statements of interest and climate adaptation. This has been the prime example you've provided in terms of what that looks like, so just kind of wanted to follow the line of questions related to that.

And I'm just curious what sort of implications there might be for any asset holder of any category that has a property in a flood plain and what this does to their ability to get insurance, and then what role GR plays in that.

**Mr. Leibel:** — Okay, thank you for the question. I know it's essentially about potential liability, who's managing that. First I want to start with, the planning is a voluntary decision-making process of elected council members of municipalities. So they can choose to have the official plan and zoning bylaw. When they're doing those plans, then they're seeking out the mapping information as needed to deal with their different development issues, including flooding if that's a circumstance. With that flood mapping, we're there to help and provide advice and comments from a technical perspective on that information. But on the legal side and the liability side, that's the responsibility of those corporate municipalities to manage, to which we give them that advice to seek legal advice on any potential liability regarding their management and decision-making circumstances.

There is an important part on the mapping and that is that . . . And

you'd raised a question about insurance and insurance companies. They've done their own mapping of the areas that they see are flood prone and flood fringe and not flood prone at all. And they make their own decisions on whether they cover overland flood insurance to people and businesses through their insurance processes.

And what we talk about is flood mitigation in the sense that okay, you have a planning bylaw. These people are in a flood-prone area. What are the types of practices that they should undertake? So flood protection includes things such as wet flood-proofing or dry flood-proofing. Wet flood-proofing is where you might raise the levels so the floorboards are above the flood elevations and nothing would be put underneath there, like your electrical or your water or your heaters, and things of that nature. Dry flood-proofing is a measure where it meant that you brought the soil up to a level so that they're not going to be flood prone at all.

And those are decisions that the council members of the municipalities make on how they're going to manage that particular development depending on its flood prone . . . the level of, degree of flooding. So we also encourage them to seek advice from the insurance companies as to what is covered.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — So what role would Government Relations have in terms of assessing potential liabilities or provincial future costs that the province may have to cover in cases where a community was flooded out and asset holders wouldn't have adequate insurance to cover their losses? I can see that sort of being in conjunction with other ministries, but I'm asking kind of, like who's monitoring and forecasting projected costs around those potential future events?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So we work really closely with the Water Security Agency and PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program] would be kind of the lead on any sort of disaster. We don't have an account kind of set aside that if there is a disaster . . . I mean that would be under PDAP.

But what is most important is — and I think might have used this term before — kind of the upstream and the prevention piece. And that's that whole piece around education which Ralph does a program with municipalities on educating kind of their responsibilities, what needs to be looked at before they issue a permit, and probably even to the point of if you issue a permit what are kind of your responsibilities after.

But as far as any sort of fund set aside for a disaster through GR, we don't have that. That would not be us.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Well I guess maybe to clarify, I was more asking about the future liability or cost associated with a potential event sort of given the current state of readiness municipalities would have in place at this time.

[17:15]

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Yeah, I don't think that the question would really apply to us, as maybe more to SPSA [Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency] and/or PDAP. That's kind of where that question I think . . . We don't have a fund set aside in case there's a disaster. That would be under SPSA and PDAP.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Yeah, I guess it's also . . . It's kind of twofold because then it's also trying to understand the effectiveness of policies within GR. Do you have indicators that you track in terms of, in general, climate adaptation statements within those provincial interests statements? And then in particular with respect to flooding?

**The Chair:** — Again I would ask, Ms. Ritchie, to stay on track of the estimates. You're kind of getting into future questions that were answered that they're part of a disaster plan and stuff like that. Please stick to Government Relations estimates.

**Mr. Leibel:** — So we do some tracking of the flood hazard areas and municipalities that have flood protection policies since it was put in place in 2012. And what we have for urban populations, 91.6 per cent of the population is protected by flood protection policies.

So when we talk about *The Statements of Provincial Interest Regulations* where it says no new development within the floodway of the river or lake system, all new development is staying out of that. And where it's flood fringe that's less than a metre of flooding, then there's the ability to flood proof that. So all new development is required to make sure that they are above those elevations. So no new development should be located in a floodway since 2012.

The decision is made by the municipality when they're issuing development permits. We process subdivisions throughout the province except for 10 cities, and we've been applying that standard since before 2012. For subdivisions of land, for when someone's subdividing land, we make sure all new subdivisions are required to be flood proofed above the 1 in 500 plus a half a metre, so we're estimating above that considered climate change.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Okay, just so that I have it correct, you're indicating that it's for new developments or rezoned.

**Mr. Leibel:** — *The Statements of Provincial Interest Regulations* is for new development or redevelopment. So if someone's taking an existing cottage lot in the Qu'Appelle Valley and then wanting to replace it with a new cottage lot, the municipality in issuing the development permit — because there's nothing the province is involved in — that development permit, the municipality would require them to flood proof above the flood elevation level.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — And then so how would it apply to existing developments?

**Mr. Leibel:** — So for existing development, the municipalities can encourage people to undertake flood protection of their existing homes at any time. That's the municipality in dealing with . . . someone could be renovating something. And through the zoning map, when new mapping comes in for flood hazard areas, then the municipalities are encouraged to adopt those new flood map areas if they haven't changed from previous. And they adopt those. They put them into their official community plan or into their zoning bylaw as an overlay to say, here's the areas within our community that are flood prone.

We require and encourage them to show a floodway versus flood fringe, so that you recognize that this is the floodway. This is the

area where houses can float down the river, and so you don't want anything there. And if someone wants to redevelop, municipalities in that type of situation can look at having them relocate to an area of their property that's outside the floodway.

If they're tearing down to rebuild something new, that's a decision of the municipality whether they're actually going to allow them to rebuild after it's to the level where it can't be livable. And those are questions they work out with the landowners at that time. Those are municipal decisions to be made.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — All right. Thank you. I just, just to sort of wrap this up very quickly, we've kind of used the flood mapping as a key example. Perhaps you could elucidate how else, within those statements of provincial interest, climate issues and concerns are incorporated. Is there anything around transportation, so on and so forth?

**Mr. Leibel:** — So with regards to transportation, that comes down to neighbourhood planning and the design of the neighbourhood as a municipality is designed in the quarter section for where the recreational facilities will be and types of housing, commercial businesses.

And so climate change, transportation networks, things of that nature, are all incorporated — or can be incorporated — by the municipality into their official community plan or into a concept plan that provides even more detail on the engineering and design of the infrastructure and the transportation network.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Any other examples?

**Mr. Leibel:** — Probably that should be sufficient I think, unless there's a particular one you're interested in.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Well building envelope and, yeah, would sort of . . . anything to do with building codes would also come to mind.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — I'll start and then I'll turn it over to Bill Hawkins, who can get into certainly much more detail. But you mentioned building code, and I just think back of, you know, how buildings and houses were built in this province. Years ago I remember living in an old farmhouse where you had to put the storm windows on in the wintertime and take them off in the summertime. And compared to the way houses are built now and the energy efficiency that's built into them has just really changed the game, so they're so much more efficient.

I could go down a tangent on what we've done in the province to make sure that it's a natural gas province, that we're heating with natural gas and not fuel oil, but that's been discussed over and over again, so I won't get into that. That gets into a political argument.

So I'll just kind of leave it at that and I'll just turn it over to Bill on the building code and the adoption of the new building code and what that means and some of the efficiencies.

**Mr. Hawkins:** — Thank you. Bill Hawkins, executive director of building and technical standards. Our shop is responsible for development, adoption, and implementation of the construction codes, and that includes building, energy, and plumbing. The fire

code is handled by the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, although it's a companion document to the other construction codes.

Currently in Saskatchewan we have adopted the National Building Code 2020 and the National Energy Code 2020. Both those documents have provisions for energy efficiency under an objective for the environment. And I think your question went to building envelope and that type of thing.

Both codes — the National Building Code, which is applicable to houses and small buildings, the energy efficiency in them, and the National Energy Code for Buildings, which is applicable to large buildings — both have components for building envelope. They also have energy-efficiency components for heating, ventilation, hot water heating, electrical systems, and fenestrations — which is the windows and doors in the building envelope — and improvements in those so that people will enjoy warmer homes with less consumed energy over the life of the building.

So much of what we do around those codes takes into account the life cycle costs of a building as opposed to just the capital cost and the operating cost over a period of time. The codes that we currently have in place came into force on January 1st, 2024. They're step codes or tiered codes. Houses, tier 2 applies to them, and effective January 1st, 2025 that will move to tier 3. Other buildings under the National Energy Code for Buildings are listed at tier 1 right now.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you for that response. Can you tell me, Mr. McMorris, where in the budget there is a relationship between these building code standards and any incentives or budgetary amounts to support the adoption of these building codes?

[17:30]

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So because the question came directly to me, I feel the obligation to directly answer it. Now I've lost my place.

Building and technical standards, our budget is \$3.062 million. A large portion of that is working with the federal government to go through a Codes Acceleration Fund, which is all about the new codes and education, making sure the stakeholders — and there's a whole myriad of stakeholders and Bill can get into the details on those — but we have to come to an agreement with the federal government in order to then do this Codes Acceleration Fund and really educate so many of the stakeholders on the changes to the code that came into effect as of January 1st.

If you want detail on kind of what we're looking at that — I mean we've got to have the agreement in place first — but I know Bill would be more than glad to get into the detail.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Just in the interest of time — thank you, Mr. McMorris — \$3.62 million, how much of that money is provincial versus federal?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So over \$2 million would be the federal portion of the code accelerator fund. Because it is called the National Building Code that we adopt, so it's of interest for the

federal government to make sure that the stakeholders understand what is expected of them. Yeah, so I mean if you were to look at a year-over-year, it's quite a large increase to the budget. But it is mainly on that accelerator fund, is the federal government's money.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — And is that over multiple years or current year?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — It is set for year 1, that amount. It's a three-year program so there'll be other money set aside, but of course, I would probably think — and I shouldn't go off on this — but the lion's share would be up front as the new code comes into place educating more early on.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Okay, so you plan to spend \$3.62 million in the current fiscal year, rolling out . . . Is that what I'm hearing? And if so, just a quick summary of activities associated with that spend.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — First we have to come to an agreement with the federal government, so those details haven't been finalized. We hope to come to an agreement.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Well I mean if you don't already have an agreement, what is the likelihood that you will actually spend that full allocation?

**Mr. Hawkins:** — Thank you very much for the question. I want to get into a little bit of detail about that Codes Acceleration Fund and the intent, where we're at to date with the planning and so on. So of that \$3.062 million, roughly 900,000 of that is recurring funding that comes to the building and tactical standards branch on a recurring basis. The balance of the money will be used for the Codes Acceleration Fund.

We've been working with Natural Resources Canada and we have tentative approval for the whole amount of \$4.8 million over a period of three years. The lion's share of that comes in the first year because some of the initiatives we intend to launch and have agreed to with Natural Resources Canada will be money intensive in that first year.

I'll give you an idea of some of the things we're going to do. The fund is intended to push energy efficiency further faster. In Saskatchewan our submission to the NRCan [Natural Resources Canada] was about developing skills, knowledge, capacity, and compliance with energy codes as the contractors, municipalities, owners, tradespeople work in the field in order to achieve those things. So we submitted our proposal to build capacity, develop knowledge and skills in the industry so that they could achieve the higher levels of energy efficiency.

Once we can confirm that that has been achieved through consultation with builders, architects, engineers, tradespeople, contractors, municipalities, building officials, and other code users, only then would we think about moving forward to higher tiers than have already been adopted effective January 1st, 2024.

So to get all of that done, we have proposed partnering with the cities of Regina, Saskatoon, and with the Saskatoon and Regina home builders' associations. Some of this funding will go into supplementary agreements with those organizations so that they can hire additional staff to work in a team.

We'll also hire some additional staff at the ministry in order to work on this project for its duration, so that in total I think it's about eight people. They'll work as a team to bring workshops, to bring information to industry, municipalities, and others throughout Saskatchewan.

Another initiative that we're looking at is developing an app that tradespeople can carry on their phone, in their pocket so that they can download code provisions on the fly to determine and to understand exactly how something should be done, as opposed to carrying code books that are bigger than any binder in the room right now.

So we have a plan. We have tentative agreements with those partners that I spoke to. We have a tentative agreement with Natural Resources Canada on the funding. It is just a matter of processing final paperwork, moving this through the approval process to begin the work. And then we will commence with putting that funding to work.

If by chance we are not successful in achieving that agreement with NRCan, that money is frozen in the budget. We will go back to our regular \$900,000 annual allotment and do some other activities.

When we adopted the 2017 energy code for the first time in Saskatchewan, we worked with what I call a community of practice to talk about what the implications were, what the challenges were, what the possibilities were. And so it included many of those groups that I discussed — the architects, the engineers, the building officials, the municipalities, SaskBuilds and Procurement, Ministry of Environment, and many others that I can't think of off the top of my head.

And through that community of practice or ad hoc work group, we developed an implementation guide that was put to work here in Saskatchewan. As an outcome of that, we've heard as recently as Friday how well it was received, that the municipalities, many municipalities across Saskatchewan, many building officials, many professional designers and contractors are using the same forms that were developed at that time. We would update that if we're not eligible to get the money from Natural Resources Canada.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you, Mr. Hawkins. I'd like to request a copy of the plan that was submitted to NRCan. Could that be provided, please?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So I think you're asking for the plan, not the agreement, which is fair enough, but we can't release anything until we . . . It, number one, has to go to cabinet.

So you know, we can endeavour after we have the agreement with the federal government. They'll have the plan of what we would want to see going forward. Then we can endeavour to get it to you, but it won't be until after cabinet has . . . It won't be until it's gone through all the proper sources.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Okay. Thank you anyways. I wanted to ask about the report commissioned by SUMA. It was entitled *Review of the Property Tax System in Saskatchewan*. It was delivered in April 2022. Could you tell me what the current status of both SAMA [Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency] and the

province's analysis and response is to that report?

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thanks for the question. It's a very large question. It has a lot of avenues that you could go down with the answers.

[17:45]

But I want to first of all start by, you talked about SAMA and — the organization, Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency — I want to just touch on the fact that we were able to increase their budget by \$900,000 this year which is certainly going to be a nice shot in the arm.

They do great, great work throughout the province. Of course they're not used in the city, but all the rest of the province utilizes SAMA. And they set a benchmark of 100,000 assessments, reassessments per year in 2018 and then been able to do that. Their budget has been frozen the last few years but with technology and streamlining have done absolutely great work in the province.

An increase of 900,000, that will certainly allow them to get ready because in 2025 is a re-evaluation year. So they're going to have an extra workload going forward but have this year to plan for it. That budget I'm sure will stay pretty consistent if . . . You know, got to go through another budget cycle next year. But it should put them in a pretty good place to be ready for 2025.

Your question then was on the IPTI [International Property Tax Institute] — got it? wow — and a committee that was struck to certainly look into property tax. And I just, from my perspective I mean I've paid property tax pretty much all my life. Thought I had a pretty good idea from farm land and reassessment and mill rate and everything else until you get into all the variations of property tax and the complexity of the system within our province.

We've got two very good guys here that understand it very well, and they've worked for four years to try and help me understand it a little bit better. And I'm not sure. They could spend another 12 years before I completely understand it.

But what I do know is that when you make changes in one area because it might be positive for one group, it will definitely have an effect on somebody else in another area. I mean there's only I guess . . . There's kind of a limited amount of money that you want to try and collect off of property tax, and how do you make it fair for everyone? And that's always a struggle. And there are so many variables from ag land to residential to commercial and then subclassing, and it gets very, very complicated.

But to have said all that, there is a group in place. We are part of that working group and are following along with that working group. Can changes be made by 2025? Probably not because there's a lot of work that needs to be done to understand the complete impact on the whole tax system for changes that may be made.

So I'll leave it at that. If you want to get into a little bit more detail on it you can, but this is a very . . . This is a pretty deep well.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Well perhaps with that overview, you could provide a couple examples about what some of the key recommendations were and how the government views those.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — So I'll just touch on two recommendations put forward by the working group, but it's extremely important to know that these are not unanimously agreed upon. In fact some of the recommendations, and a couple of them that I'm going to mention, wouldn't even be agreed upon by all the members of an association.

So if you could say that this is what SUMA stands for, it wouldn't be all the members of SUMA. There's, you know, the City Mayors' Caucus. There's the towns, the villages. There's SARM. So these are ideas that are being thrown out there. Some would agree with it. Some will not agree with it.

And two of the examples I will use is percentage of value. You know, what is the percentage of value on ag land or what is the percentage of value on industry, oil and gas for example. We changed that a couple of years ago on one of them. So some are suggesting we completely eliminate percentage of value. That would have a huge impact, huge impact.

Some are saying change the cycle. We're on a four-year re-eval cycle, and some would say we should go to two. There are some pros; there are some cons. You can look at other provinces that have moved to two year and they're moving back to four because of some of the costs. There's a whole myriad of things. Our government does not have a stand on any of those.

We would love to see consensus within the industry, the people that it really impacts — cities, towns, villages, and RMs. Not only that — that's the municipal sector — you can imagine all the other stakeholders that this has impact on, whether it's industry, whether it's oil and gas, whether it's ag, whether it's residential, resort villages.

It is a very, very complex system that when you're going to make a change you better make sure that you've done all your homework, which I was never great at, but these guys are really good at. Make sure we do all the homework so when we do, if we do, or when we do make a change, it's for the better and makes the system more equitable. So I'll just leave it at that without getting into any more detail.

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll try and keep it short. We've been in here for three hours. And I want to thank the committee members for being here. And I want to thank Hansard for being here and recording all this. I'd like to thank the official opposition for being here and asking questions regarding Government Relations. But most importantly I want to thank all the officials around me and behind me for the work that they do each and every day.

I want to single out — I did once before; sorry, Ralph — but Ralph did such a great job answering the questions. He's been at it for a while, 40 years, and this will be his last estimates. So thank you very much to Ralph for the great work that he has done

for government over 40 years, many different stripes of government, and just knows the file so well and has done a great job for the people of Saskatchewan.

As well as all the other officials who do such a good job in knowing their files and being able to brief me on a weekly basis to try and make sure that I don't stick my foot in it, so I want to thank all of them for the great work. And this is my . . . I said, "If Ralph's quitting, I'm quitting," so this is my last estimates as well. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister McMorris. Ms. Ritchie, do you have any closing comments?

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Yes, thank you. I'll try to keep it brief as well. I'll just start by thanking the minister for the answers he's provided here today to my questions, along with all of his ministerial staff. And I also want to thank the committee members and the Chair in particular, thank you. And also the legislative services, Hansard as well, for being here this evening to facilitate these proceedings. That's all from me, thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. I too would like to thank the minister and his staff. I wish Ralph well — I'm retiring with you, I guess, apparently — and my committee members and the LAS [Legislative Assembly Service] and Hansard too as well.

We will now proceed to vote on the estimates. Vote 30, Government Relations, central management and services, subvote (GR01) in the amount of 7,573,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. The Saskatchewan Municipal Board, subvote (GR06) in the amount of \$1,886,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Municipal relations, subvote (GR07) in the amount of 729,545,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs, subvote (GR12) in the amount of 97,274,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Provincial Capital Commission, subvote (GR14) in the amount of 7,274,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Non-appropriated expenses adjustment in the amount of 100,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount is to be voted.

Government Relations, vote 30 of 843,552,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that it be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months

ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Government Relations in the amount of \$843,552,000.

Mr. Goudy has moved. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund  
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2  
Government Relations  
Vote 30**

**The Chair:** — We'll move on to 2023-24 supplementary estimates no. 2, vote 30 on Government Relations. First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs, subvote (GR12) in the amount of \$17,688,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Government Relations vote, \$17,688,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2024, the following sums for Government Relations of \$17,688,000.

**Mr. B. McLeod:** — I move.

**The Chair:** — Mr. McLeod has moved. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

[18:00]

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

**The Chair:** — We will now move on to vote on the committee resolutions. 2024-25 estimates, vote 73, Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. Central management and services, subvote (CP01) in the amount of \$50,098,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, subvote (CP06) in the amount of 78,414,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Saskatchewan Police Commission, subvote (CP12) in the amount of 2,103,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Custody, supervision and rehabilitation services, subvote (CP13) in the amount of \$252,626,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Policing and community safety services, subvote (CP15) in the amount of 336,077,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 7,728,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount needs to be voted.

Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, vote 73 for \$719,318,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety in the amount of \$719,318,000.

I have a mover? Mr. Grewal. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund  
Firearms Secretariat  
Vote 92**

**The Chair:** — Vote 92, Firearms Secretariat. Central management and services, subvote (FS01) in the amount of 7,490,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Chief Firearms office support, subvote (FS02) in the amount of \$2,632,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Saskatchewan firearms ballistics laboratory, subvote (FS03) in the amount of 927,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Client services, subvote (FS04) in the amount of 1,297,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of 334,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount needs to be voted.

Firearms Secretariat, vote 92 for 12,346,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for

Firearms Secretariat in the amount of 12,346,000.

I have a mover? Mr. Friesen. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

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

**The Chair:** — We'll move on to vote 3, Justice and Attorney General. Central management and services, subvote (JU01) in the amount of \$42,103,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Courts and civil justice, subvote (JU03) in the amount of \$52,993,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Legal and policy services, subvote (JU04) in the amount of 77,353,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Boards, commissions and independent offices, subvote (JU08) in the amount of \$54,158,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of \$3,183,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount needs to be voted on.

Justice and Attorney General, vote 3 for \$226,607,000. I will now ask a member to vote on the following:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Justice and Attorney General in the amount of 226,607,000.

I have a mover? Mr. Goudy. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund  
Parks, Culture and Sport  
Vote 27**

**The Chair:** — Vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport. Central management and services, subvote (PC01) in the amount of \$10,249,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Parks, subvote (PC12) in the amount of

\$28,531,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Resource stewardship, subvote (PC18) in the amount of 8,079,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Community engagement, subvote (PC19) in the amount of \$45,414,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Non-appropriated expense adjustment in the amount of \$7,140,000. Non-appropriated expense adjustments are non-cash adjustments presented for informational purposes only. No amount needs to be voted.

Parks, Culture and Sport, vote 27 for \$92,273,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that it be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Parks, Culture and Sport in the amount of \$92,273,000.

**The Chair:** — I have a mover?

**Mr. B. McLeod:** — So moved.

**The Chair:** — Mr. McLeod. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund  
Tourism Saskatchewan  
Vote 88**

**The Chair:** — Vote 88, Tourism Saskatchewan. Tourism Saskatchewan, subvote (TR01) in the amount of \$19,603,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

Tourism Saskatchewan, vote 88 — \$19,603,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, the following sums for Tourism Saskatchewan in the amount of 19,603,000.

Do I have a mover?

**Mr. Grewal:** — I move.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Grewal. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund  
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2  
Corrections, Policing and Public Safety  
Vote 73**

**The Chair:** — We'll move on to 2023-24 supplementary estimates no. 2. Vote 73, Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. Custody, supervision and rehabilitation services, subvote (CP13) in the amount of \$8,968,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, vote 73 for \$8,968,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2024, the following sums for Corrections, Policing and Public Safety in the amount of 8,968,000.

Do I have a mover? Mr. Friesen. Mr. Friesen has agreed. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund  
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2  
Justice and Attorney General  
Vote 3**

**The Chair:** — Vote 3, Justice and Attorney General. Boards, commissions and independent offices, subvote (JU08) in the amount of \$1,664,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Courts and civil justice, subvote (JU03) in the amount of 430,000. There is no vote as this is statutory.

Justice and Attorney General, vote 3 for \$1,664,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2024, the following sums for Justice and Attorney General in the amount of \$1,664,000.

Do I have a mover? Mr. Goudy has moved. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund  
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2  
Parks, Culture and Sport  
Vote 27**

**The Chair:** — Vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport. Community engagement, subvote (PC19) in the amount of 1,824,000, is that

agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

Parks, Culture and Sport, vote 27 for 1,824,000. I will now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to His Majesty for 12 months ending March 31st, 2024, the following sums for Parks, Culture and Sport in the amount of 1,824,000.

I have a mover?

**Mr. B. McLeod:** — You do.

**The Chair:** — Mr. McLeod has moved.

**Mr. B. McLeod:** — So moved.

**The Chair:** — Is it agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. I told you I was going to be like an auctioneer.

Committee members, you have before you a draft of the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice. We require a member to move the following motion:

That the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Do I have a mover? Mr. Goudy.

**Mr. Goudy:** — So I will move:

That the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

**The Chair:** — Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. That completes our committee's business for tonight. I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment.

**Mr. Grewal:** — I will so move.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. This committee stands adjourned until the next call of the Chair.

[The committee adjourned at 18:15.]