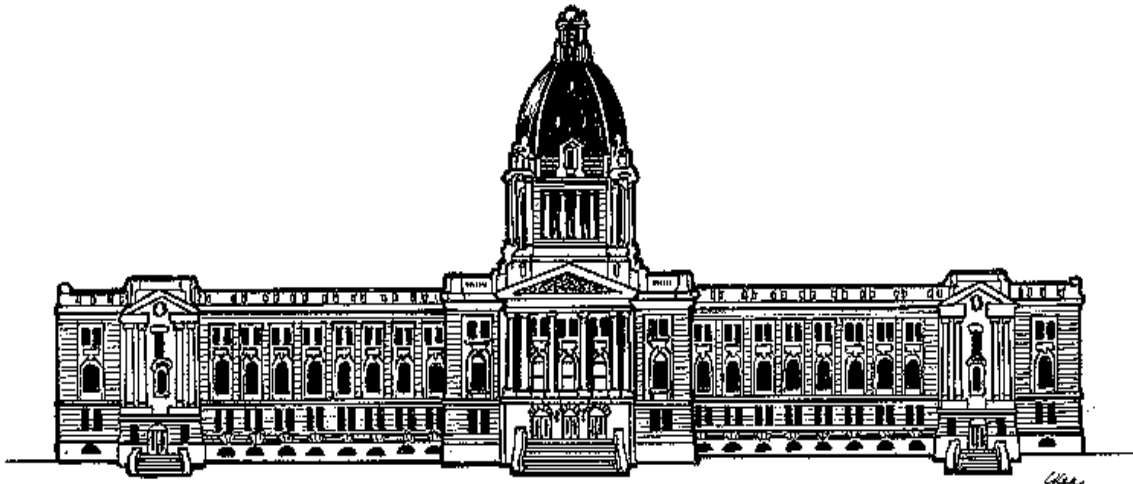




STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 14 – April 16, 2013



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-Seventh Legislature

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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Mr. Greg Lawrence
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Mr. Paul Merriman
Saskatoon Sutherland

Ms. Laura Ross
Regina Qu'Appelle Valley

Ms. Nadine Wilson
Saskatchewan Rivers

[The committee met at 19:02.]

The Chair: — Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Standing Committee on Human Services. My name is Delbert Kirsch and I'm the Chair of this committee. With us tonight is Mr. Mark Docherty, Mr. Roger Parent, Mr. Paul Merriman, Ms. Laura Ross, Ms. Nadine Wilson, and Deputy Chair tonight is Mr. Warren McCall.

**General Revenue Fund
Advanced Education
Vote 37**

Subvote (AE01)

The Chair: — This evening we'll be considering the estimates, lending and investing activities, and supplementary estimates for Ministry of Advanced Education. We now begin our consideration of vote 37, Advanced Education, central management and services, subvote (AE01).

Mr. Morgan is here with his officials. The time is 7:03. Minister Morgan is here with his officials. Mr. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and members of the committee, for the opportunity to speak about the ministry's budget and to answer your questions. Before doing so I'd like to introduce some members of our team. I have Louise Greenberg, our deputy minister, on my left and on my right is David Boehm, assistant deputy minister, post-secondary education. We're also joined by Karen Allen, assistant deputy minister of corporate and support services, Reg Urbanowski, special adviser to the deputy minister, and a number of other ministry staff members who are here observing and who will introduce themselves if they are required to provide input. To them and to members of their teams, I want to thank them for their support and the commitment to public service. These are people that have been around for a number of years and have been providing very good service to the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Chair, I want to indicate . . . And I know there was a realignment of things shortly after the last election, and for the benefit of Mr. McCall and the committee members, there are a number of things that had been in this ministry that are no longer in this ministry. That would be adult basic education, apprenticeship, training, Quick Skills, and a number of those type of programs. The services and facilities for those programs are provided by this ministry, but the programs themselves reside in the Ministry of the Economy. So we'll certainly answer the information we have around those programs, but they're not within this ministry.

This ministry is a strong team. I have a quote from Colin Powell, the former secretary of state: "Surround yourself with people who take their work seriously, but not themselves, those who work hard and play hard." I've seen this group of people work hard and sometimes play too hard. So in any event, I thank them for what they do.

Mr. Chair, I want to touch briefly on some of the highlights of the 2013-14 budget, a budget that provides significant support

for students, higher operating and capital funds for post-secondary institutions, and further investment in research and innovation. Through this budget, the Ministry of Advanced Education continues to play a key role in the government's plan for balanced growth and in particular, the development of a highly educated and skilled workforce. Advanced Education's budget of over \$787 million represents an increase of 8.8 per cent over last year.

The \$53 million increase for post-secondary education includes funding for several key initiatives as well as increases in core funding to post-secondary institutions. I'm pleased that we've been able to provide a 3.1 per cent increase in base funding operating funds to technical institutes and an average 2.1 increase in operating funds to universities, federated and affiliated colleges, and regional colleges.

Mr. Chair, this investment clearly demonstrates our commitment to the long-term sustainability of our post-secondary system. This is essentially noteworthy when many other provincial jurisdictions in the West and elsewhere in Canada are cutting operating funds to post-secondary institutions. Indeed, this marks the sixth consecutive year our government has increased funds to post-secondary education. Overall since 2007-2008, we have invested \$4.2 billion in post-secondary education. Increases in funds have been well ahead of rises in enrolment and costs of inflation. In fact, funding this year is 40 per cent higher than it was in 2007-2008.

Mr. Chair, we continue to support post-secondary infrastructure with over \$25 million in capital in this year's budget. This brings funding to almost \$404 million, the total capital investment in post-secondary institutions over the past six years. I'm pleased to answer your questions about specific projects in a moment; however, I want to begin by thanking Minister Draude of Social Services for the \$10 million our government is investing in a new student residence at the University of Regina through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation. This is an important step for the university in providing accommodation for students.

Mr. Chair, I also want to very briefly speak about what we are doing to directly support students to attend and complete post-secondary education. Our government is providing almost \$64 million in refundable and non-refundable tax credits for the graduate retention program. We are providing substantial funds for scholarships — \$12 million in this budget and \$34.5 million for loans, grants, and bursaries in the Student Aid Fund.

There are additional initiatives to support students. Up to \$4,000 per year in Saskatchewan student loans to a maximum of \$20,000 over five years will be forgiven for nurses and nurse practitioners who work in underserved rural and remote communities. We've also introduced the new Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings to help families invest in the children's post-secondary education. The budget provides \$6.5 million for this initiative.

Mr. Chair, these measures continue to help ensure our students have the tools they need to access and complete their post-secondary education and find a job in our growing labour market. We have placed a high priority on funding

post-secondary education in the province. Thank you for your time. We look forward to answering your questions.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Mr. McCall, you have the floor.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, officials, welcome to the committee and I look forward to having a good discussion tonight about the estimates here before us. I'll be looking for a bit more clarification in terms of some of that transition that the minister had referenced off the top in terms of the reorganization of government that took place in May of last year. And we'll get into that in due course.

But I guess to tip my hand right off the top, I'll be proceeding through the estimates, through the subvotes, just going through those to make sure that we're not missing anything, and then perhaps pursue a more thematic line of questioning in terms of the matters under consideration here this evening.

But in terms of vote 37, I guess just for the record off the top, there's a reduction of six FTEs [full-time equivalent] in the ministry. Could the minister describe what is entailed in that reduction?

Ms. Greenberg: — The reduction of the six, approximately six FTEs are part of the workforce adjustment strategy that's going on across the government.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the deputy minister for the response. In terms of the . . . and again, with the reorganization having taken place, I realize there's some restatement of the FTE complement attached to this particular component of government business. But this being the fourth year of the workforce reduction program, it's a 15 per cent target overall. I understand that it's different from ministry to ministry, but where does that put Advanced Education as it's currently stated for those four years?

Ms. Greenberg: — For the four years — and some of these years include when we were part of AEEI [Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration] — the total reduction was 19.6 per cent over the four years.

Mr. McCall: — One more time?

Ms. Greenberg: — 19.6 per cent.

Mr. McCall: — 19.6 per cent for a total of how many FTEs?

Ms. Greenberg: — I can go through year by year.

Mr. McCall: — Sure.

Ms. Greenberg: — 2010 to '11, the reduction — this was part of AEEI — the reduction was 29. In '11-12, as part of AEEI, the reduction was 17. In '12-13, if we still include ourselves as AEEI, the reduction was 19. In '12-13, the reduction was 9. And in '13-14, the reduction is 5. So if we round the numbers up, that gives us 144 for FTEs for '13-14.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. In terms of the positions involved, is

there any particular characteristic of those positions or is it drawn from across the ministry?

Ms. Greenberg: — It's drawn from across the ministry. No one has lost their job. It's been through vacancy management. We've used retirements and we've been able to also do some reorganization. There was a reorganization that was done May 1 when the AEEI component went over to the Economy. Actually that was on May 25 but there was reorganization done on May 1. May 25 there was a change with the creation of the Economy. And then in the summertime we were able to find some efficiencies and combine two branches. And we're able to use some vacancies that we didn't require because of the way that we were able to combine two branches, that we were able to find these vacancies through that manner and look for opportunities, using vacancies in any other way.

Mr. McCall: — Just for the record, which two branches were combined?

Ms. Greenberg: — The branches were the university branch and the private vocational school branch. They were separate and we combined them into one.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. So in terms of pressures around the complement of FTEs required to do the work of Advanced Education, yourself, the minister feeling pretty confident about the folks who got to do the job, or how is it going in terms of the average age of employees, succession issues — are they arising? Where's the ministry at in those regards?

Ms. Greenberg: — Both myself and the minister and my senior team feel confident in being able to meet the targets for workforce adjustment. We have made some changes through doing actually a number of processes, lean processes, where we were able to find some efficiencies that way. We also had about five retirements this past year — expected retirements — and we were able to manage the workload that way.

I think with the use of, some use of technology, being able to also think about how we can do some of our work a little bit differently, how we may not have to always travel around the province where you may have a one-hour meeting, use technology. That has helped myself. I started to Skype more if I have an hour meeting in Saskatoon. I'm trying to Skype now in order . . . instead of going to Saskatoon, though face to face is always important. But trying to use some technologies in order to save time.

The other thing we're using of course is trying to look at what we're doing in other areas that we should not spend as much time focusing on in our work. And we will make some of the decisions on a day-to-day while still trying to remember that the student is really the centre of our focus. That's our real client, and that we have to make sure that we provide service and support to the student through the institutions and through the ministry.

[19:15]

Mr. McCall: — In terms of succession planning and those kind of issues for the ministry, have you got that next generation of leadership coming along? And it previews a bit of a line of

questioning I've got for other parts of the sector later on, but how are you making out in that regard?

Ms. Greenberg: — Succession planning, we're managing it in a number of ways. First we've created a talent inventory. And this is not only being done in our ministry, it's being done across a number of other ministries. In creating a talent inventory you're looking at who is going to become the next director, who is going to become the next executive director, who has potential to be the next deputy or the next ADM [assistant deputy minister]. And in doing that you try to give them opportunities.

I have several folks behind me who are . . . you know, we've come here. Part of having a larger group come here, is that for them it's seeing how a committee such as this works. It gives them an opportunity to learn about the legislative process, and I think that's a part and component of succession planning.

We also try to give opportunities to staff in the ministry who may want to be able to take some training, if they feel that they need better skills, in everything from public speaking to decision-making processes, to learning how to supervise. And to the Public Service Commission they have actually a suite of courses that are available.

We also actually use a program through Johnson-Shoyama on leadership development, encourage staff to take that program and enrol in it because that's important.

Also look for opportunities . . . We have created a number of committees in the ministry, one of which is a culture committee. And they've actually made a presentation to me today about culture. And in it we have staff from across the ministry. And part of it is for them to learn to think not just only about the work they do, but the work that is done across the ministry, and how we can actually become a better-performing ministry.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the professional development aspect or the training aspect that you referenced, what sort of budget allocation does that anticipate? And has that remained more or less steady over the past few years or have you been able to hold on to those training dollars?

Ms. Greenberg: — We don't . . . We have, within each of the branches, the executive director will manage their budget and they will identify — depending on the branch because it varies; if you have a larger branch of 40 versus a branch of 15 — they will manage their dollars in it, and identify opportunities for staff. The other important thing that happens to identify some of the budget, you first have to identify what the need is of each individual. And in our ministry, across all ministries, every person now has a work plan. It goes from front line, someone who's managing students who come in to have questions on their student loan program, to myself. We all have a component in our work plan about professional development.

So the supervisor and the staff will sit down and talk about what they need to be done. And if there is special cases where they don't have the budget, they can go to their executive director or their ADM or myself to see if there's extra training dollars that are not being used in another branch so that this individual can

get an opportunity.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the lean initiative and its application in the ministry, I guess, could the minister or deputy minister characterize the lean initiatives that have taken place in Advanced Education, if there have been any savings attached to those exercises, and how the ministry has paid for the services? Is there now in-house capacity as regards lean? Have you sent the minister out for a sensei training or anything like that? Where's the ministry at in terms of lean?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We actually have got leans, an interesting aspect or an interesting program, all across government, and the best part of it is the efficiencies and the job satisfaction it's creating. We're not approaching it with the idea that it will necessarily reduce work for us. The idea is that it will create efficiencies to be able to serve the public in a better manner and make the work of our employees more efficient, more productive, and their job satisfaction is higher as a result of it.

So when we undertook the project, it wasn't done with the idea that we had a target that we wanted to reduce employees by a specific number as a result of lean. That was done through workforce adjustment, and a lean was . . . and they've done a number of programs under the lean initiative that are in various stages. I'm not sure which of the three officials are going to give you the particulars that I think we regarded as being of significant benefit.

Ms. Greenberg: — I'll start off. We actually have quite a bit on lean, so it's a question of making sure that we don't spend too much time on lean.

Mr. McCall: — I reserve the right to tap out.

Ms. Greenberg: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Please do.

Ms. Greenberg: — Please do. There's a number of examples that we've actually done in the ministry and there's also actually a number of examples that are being done in our institutions on lean. Both our staff and the institutions have, a number of them have embraced using lean.

There is a few examples actually that I'd like to highlight, and one is about how we've used lean for making life easier for students. In the summer of 2012, we announced that we wanted to improve services for students who are applying for financial assistance in Saskatchewan through our Canada-Saskatchewan integrated student loan program. And what we've done through the lean process is that students now only have to sign one student loan agreement for their entire post-secondary education rather than signing multiple agreements each semester or each year. They don't have to line up anymore at their school for paper confirmation because it's all done electronically. Twelve thousand students have signed up for loan agreements in the province. So what used to take 12 business days now is done in two or three days, so that's a saving.

There's about 50,000 pieces of paper that have been saved each year because of not having to do the paperwork each year when

new agreements had to be signed. So that's fairly significant in terms of going from 12 business days to two or three and saving 50,000 pieces of paper. It also actually makes life better for students because there's faster bank deposits now because you've reduced the amount of time that it takes to process. So that's the first example that we think has made an impact.

The second one we have, we have a computer system and it's called one-client service model, OCSM. And it's not only used by our ministry, it's used by the Ministry of Economy. It's used by Central Services ITO [Information Technology Office] division. It's used by the apprenticeship trade commission and several regional colleges. We've gone through a process using lean for OCSM, where we actually identified 62 opportunities to improve the process to implement changes.

And we've looked ways how to reduce the number of steps required to make change. It was 33; we got it down to 23. And what was really good about this lean example is that it involved four ministries, or four other groups, and so it was really good in trying to collaborate. And different ministries or groups, regional colleges, I mean, it's all about serving the student. And so we were able to actually make some changes. Work is still going on with this in the lean process, but I think it's a good opportunity.

The other thing we've been doing is providing lean training to our post-secondary institutions. We've had, out of 20 institutions, 17 participated in lean training. It was 267 people that attended the training. And this would have been from a number of the regional colleges, SIAST, both universities. And value stream mapping was actually done following the lean training. Value stream mapping was done by the institutions. So so far to date there's been 15 value stream mappings done by six post-secondary institutions.

I'd like to give just three examples for SIAST, what they've done on the lean part. One, they've actually used lean in their grievance process. It was really beneficial working with both union and management, and they were able to lean down the grievance so both union and management found it tremendous. They also were able to use lean process to get marks to the apprenticeship commission from something like, it used to take three weeks down to two days. And these marks are important because once somebody who is involved in the apprenticeship program passes their level two or level three, having these marks sent to the apprenticeship commission affects their pay because they get an increase in pay.

The other opportunity that they were able to do in SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] was look at the application process in dealing with international students. They were able to lean that process up, so they've been actually making a number of savings.

The last thing . . . I could go on but I'll probably stop. You want to know about costs.

Mr. McCall: — If I could get the overall cost and as well what sort of expenditure. So you've hinted at some things that would indicate some savings, but I'm just wondering if there's an overall number on the savings side of the equation. And then what sort of expenditure there's been in terms of contracting

with lean consultants or what sort of lean legacy there is in the department in terms of in-house capacity that's been developed through these processes that the deputy minister's outlined?

Ms. Greenberg: — I've got the costs. The costs, including the post-secondary institutions using the consultant, was \$110,250. The cost just in the ministry this year, '12-13, was \$11,500. And in previous years using lean was just over 36,000.

Mr. McCall: — Was there a particular contractor used or was this spread over different consultants?

Ms. Greenberg: — The contractor was Westmark Consulting. And I believe that was done through Central Services, and so there was an RFP [request for proposal], I believe, done for that.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for those answers. I guess we'll proceed into the subvotes, if we could, starting with central management and services. I'll not get into the minister's salary; that speaks for itself. Executive management, there was a half million dollar increase attached to that. Could the minister or deputy minister or officials describe what's involved there?

[19:30]

Ms. Greenberg: — The change is due to our reorganization. You were talking about the \$500,000. That only really . . . Pardon me?

Mr. McCall: — Yes.

Ms. Greenberg: — That only counted for two salaries. In the reorganization we brought in — and it was really just moving people from one area to another area in the ministry — so we were actually, we increased, counting salaries, I believe three more people. And that's what caused the change.

Mr. McCall: — You said that they were moved elsewhere within the executive government. Am I . . . Pardon me?

Ms. Greenberg: — No, they were moved within the ministry. Because we went through, we have gone through so many reorganizations we never actually — within our ministry between what happened May 1st and then our May 25th — we never, the budgets never, money didn't follow the individuals. So we were able to restate it and show what was actually proper people in their proper place within the ministry.

Mr. McCall: — And there won't be a need for a restatement next year? This is steady as it goes?

Ms. Greenberg: — I'm hoping there are no more restatements. It should be steady as it goes.

Mr. McCall: — All right. All right. In terms of the central services expenditure, again there's a bit of a decrease on that side of the ledger. Can the minister or officials describe what that entails?

Ms. Greenberg: — It went down because the other . . . When we restated it, we balanced off. One number went down in central services and then the number went up on the executive

management side.

Mr. McCall: — Uh-huh. Thank you for that. Accommodation services seems to be straight ahead this year, flat line from last year to this, or no?

Ms. Greenberg: — The cost is still . . . We have the same budget that we're receiving or the same payment we're making to Central . . . well Government Services.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. So the year previous there had been some, some relocation of ministry officials. The year before that I think there had been some as well. If the minister or officials could describe what this expenditure represents in terms of the business of the ministry, where the ministry is for the main located now, just for the record.

Ms. Greenberg: — There are a few locations that our accommodations are covering. We pay accommodation for the chemistry lab in Air Ronge. In Creighton we pay, there's building space in the Broderick Building. In La Ronge we have the space there that government employees are located and we have, we have been charged for that.

In Regina we also have our move to the new Tower III. There is space for that, and so it's the Tower III. We also of course have had staff in the Hillsdale location in the past year. They are moving this year to Tower III. So we have those on those three spaces I just mentioned.

Mr. McCall: — I guess that's what I'm driving at. In reviewing previous years estimates, I think last year the move into Tower III necessitated I think it was a 21 per cent increase in the accommodation expense entailed. So that it's on a relative flat line this year. We're glad to see that, but when will the move be completed in terms of consolidating the operations and the . . .

Ms. Greenberg: — We've actually, we've actually started to move. The move started to happen in I believe . . . Well this move started happening in March, towards the end of February, beginning of March. And the move is still occurring to this day. What's happening is that the building, as the floors are ready for staff, staff are moving on to the floors. We also needed to make sure that we moved at times that fitted some of the work that was going on within each of the branches, so we were able to determine what weeks were best for individual branches to move. And the move will be completed by the . . . should be by the end of April, beginning of May.

Mr. McCall: — I thought you were going to say that you got held up by the snow or some such thing. So in terms of other government operations in the same building, are there . . . Do you have neighbours that are from other ministries or is it still largely Advanced Education in that location?

Ms. Greenberg: — The only government employees in the building are Advanced Education . . . Government of Saskatchewan. There are staff who are with Mosaic who are on floors in the building. And then I understand that there could be Agriculture Canada moving into the building. There may also be folks from the public . . . some Public Service Commission staff on part of a floor, but I haven't had a chance to find out if that is accurate or not because we know we're the only ones in

the building for now.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. Moving into (AE02), the next subvote, operational support takes a bit of a dip. If the minister or officials could describe what is entailed in that expenditure.

Ms. Greenberg: — The operational support, where the difference shows, there's a few things. We realigned dollars to match the current organizational structure. There was also some dollars removed because of workforce adjustment. So the two of those, the realigning dollars to meet our changes in our org structure and our workforce adjustment, was the reason why there was a dip in there.

Mr. McCall: — Realignment of course implies the aligning of resources, you know, moving from one to other, or other objectives. What has been moved away from and what has been seized upon?

Ms. Greenberg: — It was 120,000 that was realigned to match current organizational structure, and there was \$98,000 for workforce adjustment.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. Universities, federated and affiliated colleges, I guess if minister or officials — and certainly this has been touched on in the opening remarks — but if you could characterize what this means in a broad sense, first for the university sector and then for the federated and then for the affiliated colleges, or if there is another sort of manner in which the minister would like to characterize it, you know.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — You're talking about the allocation for the universities and the technical schools, the 2.1 and the 3.1 per cent. Is that . . .

Mr. McCall: — Sure. But what is . . . No, just I guess the university, federated, and affiliated colleges, and I guess how that has worked for the universities themselves. But if there's any sort of . . . And again I realize there are questions of the way these allocations are made internally by the universities themselves, but I think of the allocation for say my alma mater, Campion College, or the way that the different federated colleges are affected at the University of Regina or at the University of Saskatchewan or the way that First Nations University of Canada is affected by these.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — To answer your question specifically, the portion of funding that goes to Campion College flows through the U of R [University of Regina] and is not funded separately, although Campion and Luther both have the right to approach government and ask for money independently, and they also do their own independent fundraising. So I suspect the officials would be able to give you the exact amount of the budget that goes to them, but that's within their relationship with U of R.

We provide the institutions with an allocation of funds based on the discussions that take place, as you're aware, between the officials at the educational institution and the officials within Finance and within the ministry. And then we arrive at a global figure that gets approved by Treasury Board and that's where the 2.1, 3.1 per cent figures came from. And it's open to them to

try and say, well we'll spend more on this, less on that, or find efficiencies within or, you know, overexpenditures on another and then they've got an obligation to make it up.

In earlier years we had given some larger increases because we felt the institutions were under some pressure. They'd had rising enrolment and so the operating funding was somewhat higher. We think we've now got to a point where the funding that the institutions receive is at an appropriate level, and the funding increases going forward should match inflation.

Now it could be that a university or one of the institutions may want to spend more money than what would be on a specific thing — they want to attract a high-calibre researcher or something, they may have to apportion or fund . . . find that elsewhere.

Both U of S [University of Saskatchewan] and U of R have chosen to go through an internal review process of their own expenditures. U of S started this year; U of R started about two years ago sort of looking at the effectiveness of the things that they're doing — whether certain programs should be continued, whether there was administrative efficiencies, whether things could be consolidated. And in both institutions it's resulted in some staff displacement. But both institutions will indicate that they regard it as a difficult but a necessary and healthy process to go through, and say that what they're doing is allocating funds in the best interest of the students. And I'm not sure whether you want me to get into it any further than . . .

Mr. McCall: — I guess maybe if I could back up a step and ask the minister about . . . You made reference to some notion of pegging future increases to inflation. Did I hear that correctly?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We think going forward, you know, as you're aware, the province is on a . . . We have a resource-based economy and some years the economy performs better than others, and those are the years that you have better ability to provide increased capital or complete projects and new initiatives. The universities, when you talk to the provosts, are . . . want to have, and I agree with them, stable funding so that they know where they're at so they can make appropriate plans. But the answer to your question about whether cost of living is an appropriate increase, that would be the recommendation, you know, without making a commitment to them that it would be that much or more or less, but that's what we've indicated to them is that we expect to be in the range of cost of living going forward.

[19:45]

Mr. McCall: — And different jurisdictions use an index that's attached to costs in the post-secondary sector which often is not, is higher than the traditional calculation of COLA [cost-of-living adjustment]. Is the minister referring to cost of living as the CPI [consumer price index] or is there some other sort of calculation anticipated?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We used the 2.1 and the 3.1 because we felt that reflected the cost increases that they had for utilities and what CPI would be reflected in most wage settlements. Now their contracts may not necessarily be at that level. In addition to that, we provided funding for a variety of capital

initiatives, sustaining capital, because even with no new building initiatives we've got on both, both campuses and SIAST, buildings that are decades and decades, if not a century old and need major work to upgrade and maintain those buildings. So the need for sustaining capital is really substantial.

So the actual increase was in excess of 8 per cent this year but the operating costs which would go to the routine type of expenditures that you would think of — salary, utilities, and the basic costs of operating — were the 2.1 and the 3.1. But when you include the other expenditures that were there for sustaining capital and that type of thing, that's where we're at the 8.8 per cent.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of that, the request or the outstanding list in terms of need for sustaining capital on both campuses — and admittedly, you know, 8.8 per cent, that's good to see — but in terms of what the needs are versus resources being put forward, where's that shortfall at? What's the outstanding capital request list looking like?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — If you ask the institutions, they will create a list and they rank order it. And the list is in the, not in the tens of millions; it's in the hundreds of millions of dollars that they would need to . . . what they would like to have to fully refurbish and bring all of their capital right up to date.

The province certainly isn't in a position to do that this year nor next year, so we'll address urgent needs as they come up and complete projects but I am . . . Sustaining capital is a broad word and it includes not just the major upgrades, but also includes a lot of things that people refer to as repairs and maintenance that aren't trendy, exciting things to do, but are absolutely essential to, you know, have the safety and security of the faculty, the staff, and the students.

So those are the things that we know we have to do, but it would be hard to answer your questions as to where — and you get a different answer depending on who you talk to — as to where ultimately you would need to be on that. I don't know if any of the officials want to add any more particulars on that. But certainly when you meet with the provosts, they can give you a list just as, a very long list. And I'm not minimizing any of it. You know, we work with them to identify the priorities and see where we need to.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the sector as a whole as it relates to capital priorities, years previous your predecessor as minister talked about the need to get some kind of a more scientific grid in terms of assessing priorities and then moving forward. And I think what one of the comparators was being used was the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] capital list. That was a number of years ago and there have been a few different sort of things happen since then, but is there such an initiative still alive in the ministry and how's that coming along?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — My officials have generously told me, one from each side, that universities have a list and we have a list but they're not the same, which is not surprising. I think it's the same and I shouldn't make light of it. I think in K to 12 you're dealing with a large number of school divisions, a large number of schools within the school division, so priorities are hard to determine and hard to identify what the priorities are.

Here we have two universities and SIAST, so we work with them and it's maybe a little bit easier. But I think I'll let Mr. Boehm answer the question.

Mr. Boehm: — Yes, I would simply add that we've recognized capital and sustaining capital as a major issue for the province, for the province's institutions, and we've taken steps, including hiring a new director of capital planning for the ministry, to work with the institutions on those lists, to make sure that we can develop a capital plan that allows us to address the capital, sustain capital needs in a I guess thoughtful and strategic way. Because there's no question each institution will have their lists, particularly the larger institutions, but we also need to work diligently with the smaller institutions that don't necessarily have the resources to put together their own assessment of sustaining capital needs.

Mr. McCall: — So in terms of . . . The sector has a list; the ministry has a list. Is there a dollar figure attached to those respective lists and can the minister or official share that with the committee?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Sorry, will you repeat that please?

Mr. McCall: — The minister had referenced that the ministry has a list; the sector has a list. Is there a dollar figure attached to those respective lists and can the minister share those with the committee?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We apparently don't have a firm number because when you talk to them, the universities say the list tends to change. But the officials indicated that if you would combine all the institutions together, you could conceivably spend \$500 million or substantially more.

Having said that, the buildings are serving the purposes that they need to. We know that they would like to have upgrades, expansions, and a number of things that are there. They're older buildings, but the buildings are serviceable and they're meeting their needs at the present time, and we've provided the additional capital in this year's budget. There's been significant amounts in previous years budget and we want to work with the institutions going forward to make sure that the buildings are safe, that they're secure, that we're not deferring maintenance to the point it becomes significantly more expensive later on. So we'll continue that, but it's hard to give specific dollar values.

Mr. McCall: — The minister had referenced earlier the provosts rightly calling for predictability and reliability in terms of funding going forward. Obviously that relates to the operating side of the equation. Is there some plan to give that, that same kind of certainty or predictability on the capital side of the equation for the sector?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think it's a goal that we've set that we would like to get them at a point where there is a better degree of predictability and a better degree of planning. At the present time, there's a fair amount of new construction under way and significant renovations under way, so it's difficult to try and say where you want to do . . . And we still budget on an annual basis.

So I appreciate the lack of certainty that they are going through

right now, but once we have the buildings to a better state than they are now, I think we'd like to have some discussions with the Finance officials to see whether we can make some multi-year commitments to try and add a higher level of comfort to them.

Mr. McCall: — Does the minister have a timeline attached to that desire in terms of when these things might be determined and, you know, going forward from there? Or is it still an amorphous sort of . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No. At the present time we want to work with the officials and want to work with all of the institutions to get things under way. You'll be aware that we've just recently announced a residence project at U of R. And U of R has done some planning on that, and it's complex because it includes a residence.

They want to include a daycare. The daycare is funded from Social Services. They also want to include a substantial parking component. You've been a student there. I've been on the campus. I know what a problem parking is there and in the adjoining . . .

So we're supportive of doing that, but the funding does not necessarily flow from the initiative, and I know they're looking to a variety of other sources. So I think until we have those projects under way or completed, it wouldn't be an appropriate discussion to have that until that takes place where we've got more of this stuff done, where we can say, yes we can do some multi-year work.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. But does the minister anticipate we'll be entering into that round of discussions next year or the year after? Or is there some idea as to when that might occur?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well I raised it with Finance, but I think right now the important thing that we're doing is getting those capital projects under way and complete. We know that we've got the Academic Health Sciences project in Saskatoon, which is nearing completion. And then we know that there is pressure at SIAST for capital there as well. So I think with all of those we would want to have those sort of the capital initiatives under way before you can do a realistic assessment of where you need to land on multi-year funding. If where you're going is that that's a desirable thing to have that, we agree with that, but we're just not at a point yet with the new things that are coming on stream to get to that.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. I thank the minister for that. I guess we'll proceed on to the technical institutes for the time being, 5 million-plus increase to the expenditure there. Again if the minister or officials could characterize that expenditure.

Mr. Boehm: — So for the technical institutions, the overall change averaged 3.6 per cent, and that includes the changed operating funding for the three institutions involved of 3.1 per cent, and also includes some dollars for SIAST for the nursing seat expansion.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. Could the minister or officials characterize the nursing seat expansion?

Mr. Boehm: — So this is part of the new commitment to increase the total number of nursing seats to 690 within the province. And of course that expansion rolls through the full four years of the offering. And this represents the increase that allows the institutions to take in, I believe it's the second year, or pardon me, the third year nurses this fall. And so there will be one more increase with next year's budget to represent the fourth year increase for the program, and then the program should be at a fully funded level.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. And just to be clear, does that include nurse practitioner seats as well in terms of previous commitments from the government, or just nurses?

Mr. Boehm: — In the case of technical institutions, it is just the registered nursing seats. If we go back to the universities and federated colleges, there would be dollars in that particular area for additional nurse practitioner seats.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. In terms of regional colleges, again the fairly interesting jump in the expenditure . . . Oh, pardon me; wrong line. If the minister or officials could talk about regional colleges, how they fared in this year's budget and what sort of advantages or pressures arise along with that.

Mr. Boehm: — So the lion's share of the increase would be attributed to the 2.1 per cent increase in operating budget. But in the case of regional colleges, the Ministry of Advanced Education would be responsible for the operational side of the budget. In terms of the training dollars provided to support training programs within regional colleges, those funds would come from the Ministry of the Economy. So while the numbers here represent the operating side, they don't necessarily speak to the program side.

[20:00]

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. The post-secondary capital transfers, again I think we've talked about that previously, but I guess maybe moving through that discussion in a little bit of a different way. For SIAST, I'm thinking of resident or residential needs that I hear about in Palliser. Can the minister or officials talk about where those requests are at and how they fit into the prioritizing of expenditure?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We have not included money in this year's budget for additional residential spaces at any of the SIAST campuses, but we know there is a need for it, particularly at the Palliser campus. You'll be aware Palliser is about a 40-minute drive from Regina. Regina has one of the lowest vacancy rates anywhere in Canada, so there is people working in Regina that will live in Moose Jaw, so that shortage of space has spilled over into Moose Jaw. There is also indications that the K+S potash mine north of Moose Jaw will exacerbate that shortage even more.

We've asked the officials at SIAST and within the city of Moose Jaw to look for some P3 [public-private partnership] options or some private options as residential issues come up within a ministry. The next one on the list to do after the U of R residence would be Palliser.

Mr. McCall: — And if the minister could quantify or clarify

what the request is coming from Palliser in terms of number of beds, expenditure involved . . . [inaudible].

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm not sure I can give you a lot of particulars on that. I know there is land available that's adjacent to it and I know one . . . You know, as they look at it, the needs of Palliser students are different than the needs of university students. They're usually shorter term students. They're apprentices that come for an eight-week stint as opposed to an all-year stint. So there's lesser need for married students' accommodation because a lot of them will commute from their home base and are willing to share or do things differently. So we've asked them to do a review of what the needs are and what options might be available to try and provide that. I don't know whether you've got anything you want to add.

A Member: — They haven't officially asked us.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes, there hasn't been a formal request from them, but the discussions we've had with them indicate that that would be their next residential priority.

Mr. McCall: — And by next residential priority, anticipated or considered in the budgetary process for next year's budget or the year after that? When do they get their hearing, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think that would be a question to put to the Finance officials and look at the province's economy. We know that there is a need there and want to make sure that we've got some groundwork laid, so that when resource revenue picks up that that's one of the things that would be a significant priority for the ministry.

Mr. McCall: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm going to get Mr. Boehm to give you the number on the number of beds. I said it would be the next residential priority. When you talk to the SIAST officials, their number one priority is Kelsey Campus in Saskatoon. And the building — I don't know if you've been there — is a number of additions and add-ons over a period of time. And they would like to do a significant expansion and makeover, a comprehensive update to that building.

So that's SIAST's first ask and then their second one would be the Palliser one. So we've committed no money for Palliser this year, but we've urged them to look at both options as to, you know, what things might cost or where we would go. But I'll let Mr. Boehm . . .

Mr. Boehm: — So the proposed facility would involve 192 beds — based on the latest proposal — about a \$15 million project overall. But I would stress that this project is very much a work in progress and, as the minister indicated, a number of different options for moving the project forward are being considered. And so again it is a bit of a moving target. The strategy around the residence is around SIAST's internationalization strategy for Moose Jaw, and so it would focus on international students.

Mr. McCall: — Well thank you for that. And so I guess the minister had anticipated my next question. Moving on to

Kelsey, and I guess a bit of a . . . Thank you for the information that had been provided, but a bit of an additional request for clarification.

There'd been purchases of land or property in years previous by SIAST, some of them quite contentious, but I guess in terms of that capital complement that attaches to Kelsey, are they making full use of the properties on hand? Are there properties sitting vacant? And again, if the minister could move from there into the requirements around Kelsey Campus itself?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — They've acquired, as you're aware, property that's adjacent to it for purpose of expansion or consolidation. Some of the property is being used for the structures that are there. And I haven't been through them, but some of them are being used for a variety of different things, but I understand some of them are vacant as well. I don't know whether there's a lot of vacant space, but the idea is that ultimately they would do a formal expansion onto the existing structure and do something that would be part of a comprehensive makeover of the campus.

Mr. McCall: — Can the minister provide any more precise detail in terms of what's sitting vacant and what the immediate plans are for those spaces?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes. Titles to the two properties adjacent to campus were transferred to SIAST in March of '11. One of the properties is being utilized to offer a mining engineering technology program. And there's a warehouse property that's not being utilized that's intended for expansion for the future. And I don't know how many square feet the warehouse is; we could certainly provide that for you.

Mr. McCall: — If the minister could make that undertaking, that'd be great. In terms of again getting back to the age of the Kelsey Campus itself, and that being the priority for SIAST around capital requests, can the minister provide any further information as to what that request looks like in terms of dollars, time frame, and on?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We have a new president at SIAST who's been there less time than I've been in the ministry. We have a lot of newer faces. We have Dr. Rosia who's been there about a week less time than I have. I have a deputy minister who's been in the position an hour longer than I have, and I certainly think that that gives her a great deal of seniority.

But what we've done is I've met with Dr. Rosia a number of times and asked him and his board to sort of work on what they regard as a longer term vision or a longer term structure for not just for the Kelsey Campus but for SIAST . . . [inaudible] . . . and I know that that's under way.

We had a number of their board members termed out recently, so they have four or five. They're under the statute. The members once they term out after two terms can't be reappointed. So we've filled them to a relatively full complement. Although we could add one or two more if we chose to, but we think it's a good working size. But the board complement is real new. Most of them have been there — what? — five or six weeks. So I can't give you any better than that, saying that they're new folks and they're going to sort of

restructure their vision for it.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Minister, for that. In terms of Woodland Prince Albert Campus, and how are things going there in terms of capital needs? Are there any sort of emerging pressures other than what the minister's outlined for Kelsey and then Palliser in terms of his sense of the priorities capital-wise with SIAST?

Mr. Boehm: — I would suggest that Woodland is probably a more stable campus. Certainly has seen growth and has some pressures that are associated with enrolment growth, but all in all it's not facing the same challenges that Kelsey faces. The only issue as of late is the fact that the Woodland Campus is used as an evacuation centre for northern communities. And because it's a major centre and location in Prince Albert, it's very strategic for Social Services and the Red Cross. And from time to time that does create some pressures, but of course those aren't necessarily post-secondary education related pressures but simply the pressures that go along with the province dealing with emergent or disaster situations.

Mr. McCall: — And coming back around to Regina, how are things making out in Regina campus, Wascana campus?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm not aware of there being any issues in Regina.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. Again we've talked a bit about housing requirements for students. The minister touched on, briefly, child care. This is particularly true throughout SIAST. Does the minister have a sense of where the sort of child care needs are for the students coming through SIAST and how they're being met or not and where those are in the sort of go-forward plan for the ministry?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm not aware of it being as big an issue with SIAST because for the shorter term of the students. University students have got a four-year or more path through the universities and are more likely to have at a time when they're starting their family. The SIAST students may be older or may have . . . Their families may be past that point. So we know that it's important when we meet with student groups. They all raise it as being a factor.

There's child care operations on most of the campus, and we're continuing to work with them everywhere to try and address it. But I would think probably the higher priority ones would be U of S and U of R, just by virtue of what our sense is that it's there. But we haven't . . . I'm not sure I can give you any greater background than that.

Mr. McCall: — No. I guess I'll be looping back around to the U of S, U of R soon enough.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — It's actually, child care falls under the Ministry of Education, so they're the ones responsible for the licensing. You know, we're certainly supportive of that.

I can tell you that SIAST has 162 childcare spaces at three of its four campuses. Regina has 50 of those. Woodland has 50, Kelsey has 62, U of R has 90, 45 at Awasis, and 45 at Wascana. I've got a U of S number, I do. We have a total of 110.

Sixty-six are available in the USSU [University of Saskatchewan Students' Union] Child Care Centre. That's in the R.J.D. Williams Building, which is just slightly off campus on Cumberland. And it operates independently of the student union and it has its own board of directors. There's 44 more spaces in the Education Building at Campus Day Care, which are mainly for staff and faculty. The R.J.D. Williams is more focused on students.

We have indicated that there will be 110 more spaces provided through the Ministry of Education in May of '11, and those spaces were split between the two existing. It'll be in the numbers that I had already given you. So we've provided funding of 1.4 million for capital construction and renovation of the facilities still to be approved by the province. So students may have a fee as we bring some of those on or have an increased fee. We haven't focused, and I suspect that will be your next question is the cost. And I don't have information on that.

[20:15]

Mr. McCall: — Well I guess maybe I'll shift to a different question and ask, does the minister have a sense of the wait-lists that are attached to each of those child care spaces, which it's my understanding is significant?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We don't. That would be information you would have to get from the Ministry of Education.

Mr. McCall: — Okay, fair enough. In terms of, and it's again jumping back to SIAST. There's a regional college component for this: GDI [Gabriel Dumont Institute], DTI [Dumont Technical Institute], possibly SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies] as well. The mobile classrooms, where are things at with those semis that would roll up and the different labs attached? So I guess sort of moving into more of a distance offering line of questioning around SIAST and the colleges.

Mr. Boehm: — So there are a number of mobile classrooms that are available in the system and they're managed by SIAST. And they tend to be allocated, I believe, one for the North, one for the First Nations and Métis institutions in the province, and one for the southern regional colleges. And you know, they are utilized and they are quite effective at dealing with trades training because, I believe, they can be set up for up to five different trades with some assembly and disassembly.

Part of the challenge with these mobile classrooms is of course moving them, but then also equipping them to operate, particularly the power supply issue. If they operate off the grid, which depending on the location — if it is a remote location, that may be a requirement — they will use a diesel generator. And that makes the operation and delivery of programming, utilizing the trailers rather expensive. In the case where they can be moved to a pad or a location where they can get access to the grid so they're using a cheaper power supply, of course there are sort of the infrastructure and hookup costs.

And so again, I think the institutions try to make the best use of the mobile training trailers that they can but there are a number of barriers, including cost barriers, that sometimes make the

option of the training trailers a little less attractive for the institutions. And of course, you know, one of the other challenges is, particularly say in southern Saskatchewan with six regional colleges utilizing one trailer, then you've got issues around, you know, cycling the trailer around, scheduling, those types of issues which require a fair bit of coordination between SIAST and the regional colleges and planning of course for . . . planning requirements for each of the regional colleges.

And that has proved to be a bit of a challenge, yet the notion of, say, assigning it to one or two colleges only just isn't equitable and fair to the various regions. So the attempt is being made to revisit that. We actually had discussions on the use of the mobile trailers with the various institutions that are involved as recently as last week, to see what we can do to more effectively schedule their use, try to cut some of those costs that I mentioned earlier and hopefully, you know, get the trailers deployed in a more predictable and routine fashion.

Mr. McCall: — I'm glad to hear that. Hopefully scheduling shouldn't stand in the way of providing these opportunities. There's got to be a way to make that happen.

I guess, in terms of the different sort of distributed learning opportunities that SIAST engages in — and my colleague from Coronation Park will be interested in this one — but projects like the LPN [licensed practical nurse] training in partnership with Kawacatoose First Nation or the continuing care aide training that was going on there, could the minister or officials talk about what sort of efforts are being made in that regard and with reference to the Kawacatoose program itself? And you know, what's the status of that endeavour? And are there other similar projects being offered by SIAST?

Then we can move on to the regional colleges as, I realize, they've got a number of partnerships with First Nations for that distributed learning sort of opportunity as well.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — To all the officials who don't know the status of the Kawacatoose program, we'll get you the information. Mr. Boehm can talk in a general sense about it, but the specifics with regard to that one, we should get the information for you. But I'll certainly let him provide some background in a general sense.

Mr. McCall: — Okay.

Mr. Boehm: — Certainly the licensed practical nursing training around the province is highly sought after and valuable. And each of the regional colleges tend to offer it on a periodic basis based on student demand. So if they can generate enough interest from students in their region to set up a class, they'll often work with SIAST to deliver the program.

And again we know, anecdotally at least, that the program is quite popular because the offerings happen quite frequently. And we know the employer — the health regions — are very pleased to have access to those graduates because typically when they're trained in a region, they often, you know, attach to a hospital or a care home or a facility in the region. And so it's a real win-win for both the student and the employer.

Mr. McCall: — Yes, absolutely. So I guess moving to more of

a regional college focus, I think of the LPN offering, I believe, between Southeast Regional College and Cowessess First Nation. And I realize these are more southern offerings, but does the minister or officials have any sort of update in terms of the way that that distributed approach to learning opportunities has been used to good effect with First Nations in particular?

Mr. Boehm: — Again, similar to the licensed practical nursing training in other parts of the province, the training that has been done in partnership with the First Nations organizations in the province, again has been very popular, has been very well received. And there's a number of examples, including the one that you mentioned in the southeast part of the province that have taken place in recent years. And again we look to our regional colleges to work with the other partners within the region, including First Nations, to offer these programs wherever possible. But again, as mentioned earlier, you know, student numbers, student demand often drives the frequency with which these programs can be offered.

Mr. McCall: — Well if the minister or officials could provide the committee with a better sort of reckoning of what's going on in that front because, as the official states quite rightly, it's a real win-win proposition for the province and for making potential labour force real, and the difference that makes to those communities, to those families. So if you could provide that information to the committee it'd be appreciated. Madam Deputy Minister, do you have anything to add there?

Ms. Greenberg: — I was just going to comment in general that the regional colleges, they actually have a number of agreements — I don't have the number in front of me — with a number of the First Nations to do training. Some of them are looking to do training in the mining industry. There's also of course training for looking at ABE, adult basic education, but they are trying to get some specific needs, some early childhood education.

There is work going on in the North between the Northlands College that's up in La Ronge. It actually has a number of partnerships in working with Lac La Ronge Indian Nation, also with some of the other communities in terms of addressing the needs. There's also the program, the teacher program, that's offered through the University of Saskatchewan with Northlands that's offered up in La Ronge. So there are a lot of innovative things going on between regional colleges, the universities, and First Nations.

I could speak, if you wanted to get into the topic, about some of the work that's going on with some of the new partnerships between SIAST and also the universities with several of the First Nations and some of the ways they're trying to connect with Aboriginal students.

Mr. McCall: — Sure.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — While the deputy minister is getting her notes out, when I came into the ministry, I asked about what the mandate of the regional colleges was and the relationship they had in particular with First Nations but also in a broad, general sense. And you're likely aware that the role of them should be to be directly responsive to community needs, to be nimble and flexible enough to develop programs as they're required by

employers in a given area, plus provide the range of services for adult basic education and the other services that are directly beneficial to the communities.

What I was particularly pleased with is the partnerships and the relationships that exist between the regional colleges and SIAST and the universities. In particular U of R, have developed a number of partnerships where the classes that are taken have got a high degree of transfer ability and that the students that start with a regional college can actually use a lot of the courses, should they choose to change midstream or even go back to take the classes later on. And I've been advised you can actually get a U of R degree without setting foot on the U of R campus just by classes that are available elsewhere. I'm not sure that it enhances your student experience, but . . .

Mr. McCall: — It certainly helps with the parking problems, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well it probably would help with the parking. That's a good point. But there some good synergies that work, and I'm pleased that the agencies and the institutions are working, are growing on that.

Ms. Greenberg: — I've got a few notes. First what I wanted to comment on is that both the University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina, SIAST, the regional colleges, of course SITT and GD, Gabriel Dumont technical institute, they all view the importance of training First Nations and Métis or Aboriginal students as a priority.

And they've all worked at this initiative in several different ways, attempted to address along with, of course, I failed to mention First Nations University. With the new president that's been installed at the University of Saskatchewan, she's actually gone out on a tour. She's trying to meet with a number of First Nations, as many as she can, across the province. And she has gone to speak to, gone to each of the reserves and has spoken to students, has spoken to the band council about the opportunities and the importance of education and training.

The University of Saskatchewan has an Aboriginal centre. They've actually created a web portal that if you go through one area on the Internet, it will actually link you to all programs and services that are available at the University of Saskatchewan that will address needs for both First Nations and Métis students.

Along with those lines, I know there has been discussion about, you know, how many First Nation and Métis students are enrolled in the post-secondary system. And one of the challenges is self-declaring. Not every individual wants to declare themselves as being a First Nation or a Métis. So the University of Saskatchewan is undertaking some efforts to verify enrolment figures. And what the U of S has said is that their numbers, they feel their current numbers don't really reflect the true reflection of the situation, that there are more students enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan than what's being done. And there's been some discussion about it through their *Campus News* in the past.

[20:30]

There's also been . . . The University of Regina had, I believe last week they announced the opening, a revitalized, revamped Aboriginal Student Centre. There is a student centre at SIAST and they've created that along with the U of S and U of R in order to address the issues of trying to provide support to students when they're in school, especially to maintain that students that are in their first year will go into their second year of education. Because that's where sometimes you'll see is some of the biggest drop out is between the first and second year. And U of S is spending some time also providing extra tutorial sessions to a number of students. And so all of them seriously take the issue of and value the opportunity to train First Nation and Métis students to meet labour market needs. And it's also. . . It's not just you just don't want to train people to work in mines. You also want to train people to be the lawyers, the doctors, the accountants, and to fulfill the broad spectrum . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. You want to create MLAs.

Ms. Greenberg: — To fill the broad spectrum of opportunities that exist for young First Nation and Métis students.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — If we can go back to one of the issues that had risen earlier. You'd asked about the SIAST warehouse when it was vacant — 9000 square metres.

Mr. McCall: — And of the acquisitions by SIAST in the last few years, how many square feet?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — That would be the only one that's vacant.

Mr. McCall: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The acquisitions were two buildings, one being used as I'd mentioned before. The vacant one, 9,000 square feet. And I understand their intention is that it's not usable space in its present form, and I think they're planning to take the building down eventually.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think we have some information on Aboriginal enrolment if that was where you were going, and I can let Mr. Boehm provide that for you.

Before he does that, I just want to indicate that the problem that we have in identifying Aboriginal enrolment is we depend on the students to self-declare whether they're First Nations or . . . So our numbers are not as reliable as they might, like them to. I met last week with the dean of the College of Arts and Science in Saskatchewan, and they have posters up and they're trying to have students self-declare, and they've indicated to students it helps the university in proving to government or proving to the province that it's fulfilling its mandate.

I'll give you an example of where I think our numbers aren't working as well as they should be. FNU [First Nations University] says that its First Nations student enrolment is 65 per cent. Well I'm guessing in reality it would be in excess of 95 per cent, but when only two-thirds of them are

self-declaring, I think that's an indication that our numbers aren't accurate. So we'll try and get more accurate information, but I think it's not accurate now and probably has never been as accurate as it should be, and I suspect the numbers are significantly higher than what the declared numbers are. But I'll certainly let Mr. Boehm give you the background of the number of students.

Mr. Boehm: — And so if we look at it by institution, in the case of the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, with a 2011-12 enrolment of 2,569 students, the vast majority of those students were First Nations, Métis, including about 2,185 First Nations students and 190 Métis students.

In the case of regional colleges with an overall enrolment of 4,681 in 2011-12, just a bit over half of those students would be First Nations or Métis, 2,450, so certainly very strong representation. In the case of SIAST, about 17 per cent of the enrolment at SIAST is First Nations, Métis, or Aboriginal.

And with respect to Gabriel Dumont and Dumont Technical Institute, the overall enrolment is 751 students and again a large number of that number would be First Nations . . . or Métis students, pardon me. And in the case of NORTEP, the northern teacher education program, again enrolment of about 147 students, and a good portion of those students would be First Nations and Métis.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of . . . And again I appreciate that there are efforts being made by, for example, the U of S, U of R. The member from Coronation Park brought greetings on your behalf, Minister, to the expanded Aboriginal Student Centre at the U of R. You'll be happy to know he did a bang-up job.

And this is as it should be. Those institutions should be making that effort. I guess the questions I would have are around the indigenous institutions themselves, and I guess we'll start with First Nations University of Canada. What's the minister's sense of where things are at with the university, First Nations University? And there are a number of ways that you can ask this question: in terms of parity for the funding of faculty between First Nations University and, say, the rest of, oh, University of Regina; adequacy of operational funding; stability of the institution itself; ability to attract federal dollars. There are a number of questions that beg to be asked in terms of where things are at with First Nations University of Canada as of this day.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I want to phrase my answer here really carefully because I want to do everything I can to promote the success of First Nations University. And I have an enormous amount of respect for the institution and the hard work that a lot of the people there have committed to — the board and the faculty and the staff.

As you are aware, a few years ago the federal government and the province both stopped funding, and only restored funding after there was an agreement that the institution would be under the supervision and control of the U of R. That arrangement continues and will continue at least for the foreseeable future until issues of administration and governance are fully addressed. You're likely aware the funding from the federal

government was \$7 million at one point. I know the federal government is looking very carefully at the institution and trying to identify the successes that are there. In the last week or so they now have a new board Chair and the president has stepped down for health reasons, so there is an interim person that's there. So I think a fair comment would be is that they're still in a state of flux. The institution will have to do some significant work to redefine itself and determine what its long-term mandate should be and identify what its relationship with the federal government and the provincial government is.

Having said that, the previous board Chair I've met with, and I met with a number of the members. I have a strong sense that they want to do the very best for the institution. I believe they have the best interests of the students at heart. And they have made significant strides in addressing cost issues and governance issues from where they were two years ago. But given the current changeover and the status of it, it's still an institution that has some significant work to do. I don't know whether that answers your question very well, but I want to phrase it that they're trying very hard and we want to give them every support that we can.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. In terms of the last budget, were their program offerings by the First Nations University, either at Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Regina, were their offerings affected by the budget that came down and that we're discussing here today?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No. I think there was some changes made to their offerings but it was more a matter of choice on their part. There was a nursing program that was discontinued and was picked up by U of S, but I'll let the officials give you the particulars on that.

Mr. Boehm: — The nursing education program of Saskatchewan ended recently and, as a result, First Nations University's involvement with that program also came to an end. And with the end of the program, the funding that used to be provided for that program was removed from First Nations University's budget in order to fund the new nursing programs. That includes the U of S's nursing program and the collaborative nursing program offered in combination between University of Regina and SIAST.

Mr. McCall: — Just for the records — and I get the idea that one program expires, you negotiate the new one — for the record, why wasn't First Nations University incorporated into the new iteration of the program?

Mr. Boehm: — In the process of developing the two new programs, First Nations University was at the table as part of those discussions. But if we look back at that time, 2009, 2010, that was a particularly difficult time for First Nations University in terms of some of the changes that the institution was going through at that time and some of the challenges that the minister mentioned earlier. And as a result, the institution was just not in a position to participate despite offers being made by at least one of the providers at the time.

Mr. McCall: — So again I'm not certain that I follow the official as well as I need to. In terms of the problems of 2009, '10, again how did they impact a program that has come to an

end at the end of this fiscal that has just passed?

Mr. Boehm: — There's overlap between the nursing education program of Saskatchewan and the new two-provider model. And so planning for the new model, the new two-provider model, was taking place around 2009, 2010. And the nursing education program continued to take in students, and so it would require four years to wind down.

And so in the case of First Nations University's involvement in that program, that just ended or will end very shortly. And as a result, the funding was withdrawn. But planning for the two new programs and the actual creation and announcement of the two new programs happened while NEPS [nursing education program of Saskatchewan], the nursing education program was still an active program, although in wind-down mode.

Mr. McCall: — All right. I'd thank the official for that answer. In terms of SIIT, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Dumont Technical Institute, does the minister or officials have any sort of broader observations in terms of how this budget enables them to meet their mandate and do their work, or challenges that arise for those institutions and opportunities?

[20:45]

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We gave additional funding mid-year to SIIT because of some of the successful programs they've got. We provided I think — was it 140 or 150,000? — 150,000 additional dollars because they had an incredibly successful aircraft maintenance program being operated in Saskatoon. Last spring there was some talk they would have to cancel or reschedule convocation for the students completely because they all had jobs and were all off working. I'm a fan of having convocations and celebrating the success, but I can't imagine a better way to do it than be working.

And anyway they were able to have the convocation and that program was intended to run with intake every second year. It would be one class at a time. So we've given them additional funding to enlarge and take that program, so that will get an increase. That will be, I think . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . an annual program. That one is funded by Ministry of the Economy but it's regarded as a successful program.

The institution, to say it had a setback last year would be an understatement with the passing of Randell Morris. You're likely aware, he was an individual in his 40s — you've likely met him — taken ill one day and passed away the next from an unknown stomach problem. But he was very much the lifeblood and the driving force of the institution.

Sort of ironically, they had just started a strategic planning process before he passed away, and one of the first issues that they were wanting to deal with as part of that was a succession plan. They didn't start it. Ray Ahenakew has stepped up and it is operating as it should, full complement in all the classes. We regard it as a well-run, competent institution, successfully graduating students, meeting its mandate. They are now in the early stages of a search for a replacement for Randell and it will be really big shoes to fill. So I'm hopeful and optimistic that they are able to find the right person. And I know the federal government is looking carefully at that as well. I will let the

officials comment on GDI.

Mr. McCall: — Before you go on, I'd just like to agree with the minister. The passing of Randell Morris was a tragedy, and certainly not just for SIIT that he'd given a great part of his life to the betterment and advancement of, but certainly to the province. It was a big loss. And I haven't had a chance to state that publicly but I certainly agree with the minister in terms of the hard loss that the passing of Randell Morris represents for the province.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes, I am . . . I thank you for that. I'll make sure that we pass that on to them or give them a portion of the *Hansard*. But you're right. It was one of those. It was a rough funeral. The Premier came and spoke at it. And it was something that for the province . . . It was just one of those losses you don't expect to have happen, and it was difficult.

I'm suggested that the officials may want to have a break and stretch their legs. The Chair's indicated that maybe we should take a five-minute . . . 10?

The Chair: — Thank you very much. We will pause for a 10-minute break.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. If everyone is ready, we will start again. And Mr. McCall has the floor.

Mr. McCall: — Well thank you very much. I'm flying solo right now, but I'm up for it. I should be throwing the hardballs now.

But anyway, I guess we'd left off discussing the passing of Randell Morris, and again I'd certainly agree with the minister's comments on the great contribution that individual made.

In terms of the go-forward with SIIT, certainly Ray Ahenakew coming back to the CEO [chief executive officer] position, though not I'm sure apparent in his retirement plan, certainly an individual that did a lot for the institution, let alone in other aspects of public life in Saskatchewan. So that offers some consolation. But certainly, I'm sure Ray would be more happy enjoying his retirement than taking the institution forward. But that all being said, the minister's impressions, if he could, in terms of challenges and opportunities for the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies.

[21:00]

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The successes they've had are focused directly on the successes of the students. The career achievements of the students on graduation for their programs is their significant measure of success.

One of Randell Morris's other strengths was his ability to work with both the federal and provincial government. And there was a keen understanding on federal minister Duncan, who's, as you're aware, not the federal minister anymore. But the federal minister, my federal counterpart was highly supportive. So I think the opportunities that were there were strong, were good

opportunities going forward.

It's my hope that whoever the replacement is for the long term is able to either redefine a similar direction or pick up the same direction that was there. So the problems that I see in the short term will be the transitional ones that come about that. But so far Mr. Ahenakew has done an outstanding job, and I'm not aware of any issues. I don't know whether the officials have anything that they want to add.

Mr. McCall: — Just before we leave off SIIT, with First Nations University and with SIIT, the minister has referenced the possibility of federal funding or the question of federal funds being extended to those institutions. We just had a federal budget as well. Was there in any change in the status of funding, or is this still a theoretical and not an actual extension of funding from the federal government?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We're not aware of it making a change at this point in time.

Mr. McCall: — Is there a timeline in terms of how this might go, or is it just a matter of there's a new federal minister and that minister needs to get up to speed and we'll see how things come in the future? Or does the minister have any to add to that?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I haven't had the opportunity to meet the new federal minister, so I'm not able to comment on what there might be. I know federal minister Duncan was a strong fan of Randell Morris and SIIT. So to the extent that there's a new federal minister, I would suggest to FNU that this is an opportunity for them to have a new person and a new opportunity to work with as they develop things through, that they should treat this a system reset.

Mr. McCall: — I believe we were going to get into Gabriel Dumont Institute and Dumont Technical Institute. But before we get there, just to be absolutely certain . . . And again this arises from the reorganization of responsibilities and something that I think is often the Ministry of the Economy now. But your predecessor had signed tripartite agreements with First Nations and the federal government around active measures. Does the responsibility for the conduct of those programs attach now to the Ministry of the Economy or is it with the minister?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — With the Ministry of the Economy. But the officials will give you some general comments, and I think the deputy minister has some specifics.

Ms. Greenberg: — I was just going to further comment that the Ministry of the Economy is responsible for active measures, and they've been in discussions with the federal government on active measures as our Ministry of Advanced Education no longer has that role.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. If we could, Gabriel Dumont Institute and Dumont Technical Institute's opportunities, problems in the sector they're in.

Mr. Boehm: — I think generally we can say that both the institutions have been performing well. If we look at enrolment changes, there was a bit of a hiccup in the past year, in '11-12,

but that was largely driven by the cancellation of a federally funded program called the Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund. But overall Gabriel Dumont and Dumont Technical Institute have seen positive growth other than that. In terms of their operating, again like a number of the other institutions, the Gabriel Dumont component would have received the 2.1 per cent lift that was similar to the universities, federated and affiliated colleges, and the regional colleges. And the Dumont Technical Institute component of the institution received the 3.1 per cent lift, similar to what was received by the other technical training institutions.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the official for that. Yesterday we had the tabling of the joint task force on improving education and employment outcomes for First Nations and Métis people. Minister, your predecessor was a signatory to the initial agreement. If the minister or officials could update the committee as to the relationship of Advanced Education and this minister to the responsibilities arising from the report that was tabled?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The split of the ministries will make it a little bit more complex to provide a form of response to the JTF [joint task force]. We had access two or three months ago to the interim report; the final report is not changed a great deal. We think, in a general sense, that the report lays out some good principles and is a good starting point. We're going to work to have a bit more of a formal response. We know that a number of the recommendations are things that we have a lot of support for or support the underlying principles of where they're going with them. And I'm going to give you a couple of examples, and then I'll let the deputy minister give some more particulars.

We knew from the interim report that there was a strong need for shorter term programs that tied directly to a specific job with a specific employer. We've already had some discussion with some of the larger employers in the North and with some of the regional colleges as to whether they were able to provide training to operate a backhoe or a Bobcat or some kind of equipment that would be used underground. And I know that those discussions are ongoing. Also, the notion of the need for driver's licences, which is an SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] issue. So the complexities come down to it is that the recommendations of the task force spread across a number of ministries, so it's not . . . And now with our ministry being split, it makes it more complex. We'll want to have some discussions.

But the need for First Nations Aboriginal employment and First Nations Aboriginal education is something that I think is really fundamental to where the province goes in the future. First Nations people are here. They're not going anywhere. We need them in the economy. The bridge between where they are and where the jobs are is something that must be addressed. They should have every right to participate fully in the growth and prosperity of the province. And the way to do that is through education and training, not just through what's provided through this ministry but K to 12 and pre-K.

So there's a host of things that can and should be done, and I think the Premier sort of summed it up that, you know, we don't want to spend a lot of time having discussions and working groups. We want to sit down and just have some of the things come into force.

I'm going to let the deputy minister give a few more specifics, but in a general sense we want to work with what's in the report.

Ms. Greenberg: — Thank you, Minister. There's been a number of ministries involved at the working level with the secretariat from the task force along with officials from FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations], so we've met during the course of the year to get updates, progress on their recommendations. As you know, they were consulting over this past year and also receiving briefs. So Advanced Education was involved along with other ministries including Education, Economy, and Government Relations.

There was a number of recommendations that were made in their 25 recommendations that pertain specifically to post-secondary education. Some of these recommendations deal with specific recommendations to the federal government, including requiring federal government increase their supports for post-secondary students through the post-secondary student support program and making bursaries available to Métis students. The dialogue will continue with the federal government in terms of providing supports through the federal programs.

The province, though, does offer supports to First Nations and Métis students in the scholarships we have, including the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship. There's also supports that are provided through loans that they can apply for, and we actually do have a number of First Nations and Métis students that go through our student loan program.

Another recommendation was no. 16, talked about the seamless transfer of credits among provincial institutions. And this is a recommendation that touches not just First Nations and Métis students but covers the depth and breadth of all students. And we could probably spend hours having debates and discussion on how to address some of the issues about credit transfer because it's a complex issue, and one that not only gets discussed and talked about in this province but gets talked and discussed about across Canada.

There was also a recommendation about indigenization and decolonization, that the post-secondary institutions need to include that in their teachings and in the things that go on at the universities and at all institutions. And I think there have been some positive steps made which I covered off, that some of the post-secondary institutions are covering with.

Also they talked about number 18, on recommendation 18 on leadership programming. And it's really about being able to provide mentorship, internship, co-operative work options to First Nations and Métis instructors, faculty and staff and to leadership positions. And that's I think important, was an important recommendation and one that will continue, we will examine and look at for opportunities. There are, I think, opportunities with both the public and private institutions, co-operative opportunities, and I think there is work to be gained on that.

The other important thing that they talked about was really . . . They talked about languages, the importance of languages, and also about looking at aligning education from post-secondary

and labour needs. They did discuss some of the things that fell more into the labour area, so I'll probably stop my comments with this.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the deputy minister for that. And I guess those are all good things, and certainly we'll be watching with great interest to see how they are realized or not.

But I guess, again to be clear, what I'm looking for is an indication of the ministry's . . . Certainly the ministry has been involved to date, so I'm looking for clarification on the ministry's involvement on the response to the report, and particularly in response to recommendation 25, which calls for:

. . . senior elected provincial government, FSIN and MN-S officials establish an action-oriented table to consider and act upon this . . . [request]. This would involve long-term, integrated, multi-year planning to systematically address actions, including the setting of outcomes and targets, creating measures and reporting on progress. The Joint Task Force believes that the federal government should participate in this process.

That one of course is, in the opposition one of our main jobs is of course to look for that accountability with government and for the good work performed by Mr. Merasty and Mr. Hoium and Ms. Bouvier. And as that chapter is titled, we want to make sure that it doesn't languish on a shelf someplace.

So for my purposes here tonight, as the critic for Advanced Education, asking questions of the ministry that was a signatory to the memorandum of understanding that launched this exercise, I guess I want to know two things: is the ministry going to be involved in the response going forward? And I'm presuming from what you've said, that it will be. And does the ministry, the minister, agree with recommendation no. 25, and will the minister or representatives of the ministry be serving in that capacity going forward?

[21:15]

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The report was just released, so we haven't formalized between the ministries a formal response to the report. And I'm not sure whether there will be a formal across-government one, but I think we owe the process a response to the individual recommendations from this ministry because we're one of the ones that's directly involved on it. So our officials are going to work through that over the next . . . We'll work with the other ministries.

When we read through the recommendations, we didn't see things that we disagreed with, as much as we saw things that may require other partners' involvement and issues from other levels of government. So we have things that need some additional detail and some fleshing out. So, as I'd indicated, we regard it as a first, a good first step, but for us to say we accept and endorse each of the recommendations and can give you a timeline for that, I appreciate your role as a critic and the need to hold us to account on it, but the report is too new for us to be able to commit to a timeline or which of the specific recommendations that are there.

Having said that, it's not a matter that we disagree with them,

but it may be something that we'll have to come back with, I think, but it's a fair question.

Mr. McCall: — Well fair enough, Mr. Minister, we'll await that more fulsome response on the part of the government. But obviously, I think, as has been amply demonstrated by our discussion preceding this particular point of the discussion, Advanced Education has a very important role to play in making sure that Saskatchewan realizes that potential in terms of First Nations and Métis people education, employment.

Shifting gears a bit, Mr. Minister, officials, back into the regional colleges generally. I guess if the Minister or officials could talk about, give sort of the problems, opportunities, challenges, opportunities, assessment of what's facing the regional college sector at present in the province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The regional college model works for us. I've gone around and I've toured a number of the facilities, and I was surprised at the diversity. Well you'd had this portfolio at one time as well, so you would be familiar with it. But I went down to Great Plains, and I wasn't aware but they operate at 10 different locations and a variety of programs and everything from wind turbine technology to a myriad of other programs. I have not yet gone to the Southeast, and there is a capital project that is just under way down there that was approved and started before my time. So I think one of the officials can probably give you some particulars on them.

And then in this year's budget, we provided \$1 million for a trades and technology centre at Yorkton. There is several millions of dollars of money that's come from the private sector — 1.225 million from Potash Corporation. I think there is a number of other partners coming on, as well as the city of Yorkton. I'm not sure what the total cost of the project might be by the time they finish their planning and tender everything, but I think it's one of those ones that will probably be funded a third to half by non-government sources. There will be programs and there will be the power engineering type of program. And there is strong need for that or there is certainly strong demand from the businesses in that area. So I've been through that campus and met with the people there.

And I've also gone to a number of the other facilities around the province, and I think I was pleased with what I saw from most areas. And I commend the area boards because they're . . . You want to have boards that have got good ties to the local community where the institutions are and also are able to relate well to multinational corporations that are some of the significant employers. And I think it just shows that Saskatchewan is ready for prime time. It's doing amazing stuff in some of the centres. I don't know if . . .

Ms. Greenberg: — I just have a few comments that I wanted to just talk about the regional colleges, and this actually speaks to First Nations and Métis. Looking at their enrolments, actually they provide more training and education to First Nations and Métis learners than any other post-secondary institutions, so they actually do a lot.

When you think about it, they deliver credit, non-credit programs and courses that cover adult basic education, technical

vocational training, university programming, personal development courses. They broker courses through the province's two universities, SIAST, and other credit institutions. So they actually in some ways are a jack of all trades, and as the minister said, they do tend to offer certain courses depending on their geographic location, other businesses, requirements in terms of labour markets that are going on in their region. So both the regional colleges and SIAST can be nimble in ways that the universities can't because of the length of programming. So they do have a lot.

I think the opportunities that are there is for them to in many ways, instead of appearing as seven distinct colleges — they are distinct; they've got their own boards — but also being able to act as one and part of that is being able to have . . . And they do meet and they do try to strategize and talk about some of their future and some of the things that they should be doing and should be offering. So they have served a . . . They've been useful to citizens living throughout the province, and have potential. It's just a question for them to decide on some of their visions and areas that they want to be able to develop and work on at times in alliance with SIAST or the universities.

Mr. McCall: — Well sure.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Boehm has got some additional information if you want it.

Mr. Boehm: — I would just comment that our regional college system is going through a period of renewal as well. And we've attempted to assist the college in that renewal process through some training around the board governance piece, recognizing that strong governance is the key to an effective set of institutions. And to that end they have joined with some of the rest of the institutions in the sector to participate in a new board governance training program that we're now offering, with the first sessions just being completed roughly about a month ago. And again, good representation across the sector and exceptional representation from the regional college system.

And I mention that because again we are going through some change with our regional colleges, particularly in the leadership roles. We have a new CEO at Carlton Trail Regional College, Dr. Ivan Yackel. In terms of Great Plains College in the Southwest, we also have a new CEO there in the last year, a gentleman by the name of Dr. David Keast who has joined Great Plains College. In the case of Southeast Regional College, Mr. Dion McGrath is the new CEO there. So you can appreciate some significant change within the system.

The only other thing that I would offer is just in terms of again the funding commitment associated with this past year's budget, or this year's budget, 2.1 per cent on the operating side, and with respect to the training dollars or the program funds, 4.3 per cent increase from the Ministry of the Economy on the training side. So certainly again, opportunities for our regional colleges to expand their programming based on that level of funding.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — With regard to the renewal, some of the new CEOs that have come on have been really strong individuals. I knew Dr. Yackel from my time on the Saskatoon Public School Board. We're pleased that he's there doing a good job. Apart from his momentary lapse to try and run for

politics in the last election for another party, he's been a fine individual.

Mr. McCall: — I take exception to the minister's exception and give him an unqualified, you know, boost of confidence. But certainly the ministry, it was, you know, generous to see Mr. McGrath head out to Southeast Regional College. I guess, you know, I'd go on record at this point and say, in terms of those barriers or the challenges that present in the post-secondary sector, one of the greatest challenges we have is distance in the province of Saskatchewan. And certainly the regional college sector has always been a bit of an ace in the hole in terms of taking those learning opportunities to the learners. And so I'd just sign up for the amen chorus in terms of the compliments I hear being extended to the work of the sector.

Back to where Mr. Yackel has landed, and I'd be remiss if I didn't ask for a bit of an update in terms of Carlton Trail Regional College and the situation around Muenster. What is the status there? And I'm glad that Mr. Boehm referenced board governance. Certainly there were some challenges there that flowed directly from some shortcomings in the governance that was practised there. But if the minister could comment.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Sure. The issue actually, I think Carlton Trail is operating as it should in the ordinary course. St. Peter's at Muenster was placed under an operational control of the U of S, and I understand are meeting the expectations that U of S had. And I think all but one of the restrictions either have been lifted or are going to be lifted, and they're close to fully functional, as they should be. But I'll let Mr. Boehm give the particulars. But we think the issues that are there are working themselves through.

A comment I'd make is the recruitment for boards for the regional colleges is a somewhat difficult issue. You want a strong contingent of local people, so in smaller communities it's difficult to find people that have had exposure to a larger board or the type of needs that are there.

So the training that was developed at Johnson-Shoyama, we're encouraging all of the boards of regional colleges and boards . . . I think we're doing the university as well on that. It's a fairly comprehensive program. I've talked to a number of the people that are midway through the program now, and I might ask Mr. Boehm to give you a bit of a background on the information that was developed. But I think by training the individuals that are on the boards, it provides them with a good background, for not just for that board, but for anything else that they might do later in life. So I think it's a benefit that goes to the community, not just to the individual, and serves the individual as well.

So I'll let Mr. Boehm comment briefly on Carlton Trail and on the board governance piece, if you wish. If you don't want . . .

[21:30]

Mr. Boehm: — So just on the board governance piece maybe first of all. This is a program that has been developed, and as I mentioned, is being currently delivered to about 50 members of post-secondary institution boards across the province. A very

good mix from the different institutions which I think also provides an enhanced learning opportunity for the various board members that are participating because they get perspectives from each of the institutions.

And so we're very pleased for the level of interest and commitment by board members because it's not a small commitment. There's four training modules of two days each. There's actually an exam because it is a certified course, so there's an exam at the end of the process as well. And we are very pleased with the level of engagement, and as the minister's pointed out, we've had some very positive feedback about the program so far, and we look forward to the rest of the modules.

With respect to Carlton Trail and sort of the re-establishment of the board there, that work has taken place over the last roughly year and a half. Again a new board was formed, training was provided to that board in addition to the governance training that I mentioned a moment ago. And so we feel that that institution has had a chance to get, you know, get its feet back under it and is certainly progressing very effectively.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. Just one question with regards to Northlands and obviously, speaking of distance and geography, certainly a massive sweep of the province entailed in Northlands's beat.

Is there particular consideration being given to their positioning as regards the potential expansion of the resource sector in the North, but also even to things as simple as the challenges that the public service has in terms of recruiting positions in the North, and again operating on that principle of, if you can get the learning opportunities there for local population, it's a better bet around retention?

And I know that certainly NORTEP and NORPAC [Northern Professional Access College] does some of that alongside the work that Northlands does, but is there any particular sense of mission or set of initiatives on the part of the ministry in meeting that challenge?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — That's a really good question. Providing the services in the remote areas is difficult for a whole host of reasons. Access is sometimes difficult, depending on the season and roads to get to the remote points. Accommodation for people is difficult. You're paying the northern living allowance, so cost becomes a factor. And then having the support facilities by way of restaurants, housing, everything else that's there.

Some of it might be addressed by the recommendations that came from the JTF, that they were talking about shorter courses that would be operated on site so you may have a . . . I don't like to use the word travelling road show, but where the courses would be delivered in a short duration by having teaching people go out and operate on a short-term basis rather than setting up a formal school or a college in a given community that, yes we have a need for program X or something. So those are all things that we want to work through.

I've gone through the facilities at La Ronge and there's different buildings that are owned by government agencies and there's a lot of borrowing and sharing, so I think there's enough space, but whether it's appropriate space or used by the right

agencies is different. But I'm glad to see there's, when you go there, there's excitement and enthusiasm and there's a strong desire to develop the programs that work. So having said that, I'll let Mr. Boehm . . .

Mr. Boehm: — Just to respond to the question about training and training needs in the North, one aspect that we can point to which we think is very good news with the current budget is the introduction of northern career quest 2. So a follow-up to the original program. Again not the Ministry of Advanced Ed's program, the Ministry of the Economy's program. But certainly a very positive step in terms of that matching up or linking of students and employers.

Mr. McCall: — Well thank you for that. I guess departing from the regional college front particularly, but we'll get into credit transfer soon enough, I was glad the deputy minister mentioned it earlier because this, of course, is what makes a lot of these things hang together.

But before we get into that . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Before you move into another topic, I want to make a correction on something I'd said earlier. You had asked about the residence at Palliser. I had indicated that a formal request hadn't been received and I think I gave you the response that their primary concern was Kelsey campus. As part of the budget request, Palliser was the number two item, and it was included in their formal budget request. So I stand corrected.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for that clarification. So before we . . . And again with northern career quest and different of these programs, I just want to get it very clear in my mind so I'm addressing my concerns to the right place. So again adult basic education is now off in Ministry of the Economy.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — As is apprenticeship and the skills training allocation, GED [general educational development]. And we provide, this ministry provides the classroom space, the operational space, but the actual programming is paid for by Economy. We're fortunate at this point that the officials that are doing it used to be part of this ministry. So at this point, it's working really well.

And the purpose for having had that moved into the Ministry of the Economy was we regard that as direct expenditures for economic growth in the province. We want it to be separately accountable and want to make sure that it was given the ability to try and say, yes, we've got a program such as we do at SIIT where yes, if we have more money, we can graduate more kids — let's do it right now, and let's do it as part of that — where we're looking after bricks and mortar and making sure the facilities are right. We're looking at sort of the broader issues. And at this point, it's working well.

Mr. McCall: — Regina Skills and Trades Centre, Mount Royal West Campus up in Saskatoon — Ministry of the Economy as well? Provincial training allowance, is that still with . . . Who's got the provincial training allowance these days?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm not receiving it, although some of . . . but it's Economy as well.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. Thank you for that clarification. I guess the last couple of questions I'd ask on this score, the minister was kind enough to talk a bit about the labour market agreement and the Labour Market Development Agreement that the province has signed with the feds and what sort of impact the federal budget would have on those agreements. And I guess, I'm gathering this may be a question better directed to the Ministry of the Economy, but certainly what happens with those agreements has an impact on Advanced Education and a lot of things we've been talking about here tonight. So on the labour market agreements with the feds, what involvement does the Ministry of Advanced Education have on the go-forward? And then I've got a follow-up on the specific sort of measure proposed in the federal budget.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We have no information on it. The only comment that I can make is when the federal budget was announced, we knew that it was a tighter budget than a lot of people had anticipated six months ago. So we were looking carefully to see whether there were things that would have an adverse effect on it, and there's nothing that we've seen in going through the federal budget that has a known impact on anything that this ministry does or anything that we see on the spillover that might come elsewhere.

But that was a question you'd have to put to Minister Boyd. But we sort of had a look at it, thinking that if there was something that affected that ministry, was there anything that was going to impact on us. And the initial look at it from the finance people within this ministry are that programming and commitments remain intact.

I think we're at a bit of a sensitive time because we've seen what's happened in other provinces. I happened to be in Alberta at SAIT [Southern Alberta Institute of Technology] the day after their provincial budget came down, and they were looking at a minus 6.8 per cent cut. So not a matter of a zero but a minus 6.8. And they were, you know, debating what kind of things do you cancel. And we've seen what's happened in British Columbia, and we've seen what's happened elsewhere.

So I think we're happy that we're able to not only maintain the level but actually offer some additional enhancements. But we're very conscious of the fact that if this is what's taking place in other provinces, we worry about whether the federal government will have some tighter times ahead. But so far we regard our programming as intact.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the proposed job grants program that was in the federal budget, in terms of the feds putting up \$5,000 for training, dependent on matched provincial 5,000 and matched industry 5,000, again I'm presuming this may be a question better suited for the Minister of the Economy, but I guess our concern in talking to people in the sector is there's not a lot of certainty as to what that means. And if it means that it's going to take dollars from existing programming that is very successful and oversubscribed in terms of enrolment and industry interest and instead put it down on a program that is not really well understood what it means for getting people ready for the job site, that's a problem. That's a big problem.

And I guess again it's not directly in the minister's bailiwick, but does he care to provide any comments or assurance to the

committee that that's not the problem that it would appear to be?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I can't speak either for the federal government or the Ministry of the Economy. I can say that the preliminary assessment of the federal budget that we've done is that there does not appear to be things that affect us in a negative way. To the extent that they announced a new program that involves partnering with the province, we're always interested in looking at a program that we spend with 50-cent dollars. So I think it would be probably appropriate for me to let Minister Boyd comment on whether there'll be some impact on that. But my guess is it's something that they would regard as an opportunity rather than as a threat. But that's, once again, that's his ministry.

Mr. McCall: — Well I guess before I — thank you for that, Minister — before we move into credit transfer, which I'm very interested to hear the ministry's thoughts on the matter, the minister or officials had briefly touched on the matter of co-operative education earlier, which has proven to be a pretty successful way to square that circle of paying for education, maintaining accessibility, getting that foot in to job opportunities. What does this budget do in terms of improving the co-operative education offerings, say, at the University of Regina campus or throughout the province?

Ms. Greenberg: — When we provide funding, operating dollars to both universities, we don't specifically target co-operative training or the ability to have more dollars for a student to enter the co-operative program. But what we do do in government, and which actually is done in other institutions, is provide opportunities for co-operative students to work in government. And we welcome the opportunity, and students do apply. We have though committed to looking at detailed planning of how we can actually expand post-secondary co-op and career development opportunities in the province. And that was a recommendation that was in the Saskatchewan growth plan, and so we did commit to undertaking detailed planning for this year as a go-forward.

[21:45]

One of the things that we can do within government is that when you take a co-op student on, you actually don't burn the FTE. So as long as you have the budget to pay for the student as a co-operative, as a co-op student, you can have the capacity to take and not worry about overburning your FTE. So it's a good opportunity to take co-op students and taking also intern students.

And we have a student with us today who's an intern student who is through the Johnson-Shoyama school. And we've been doing . . . taking interns for the last number of years. And having an intern enables the student to experience a wide variety of opportunities and learn how government works, how policy is done, and get a chance to get some experience. So we do see the value of co-operative education in terms of career development.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. So in terms of the detailed plan that the ministry has been tasked with, when can we expect that in the broader public?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The officials indicated to me they will prepare over this year as part of the growth plan. So we regard it as a significant commitment. So they will make the . . . prepare it in the '13-14 year with the expectation that submission will be made to Treasury Board for the next budget year.

Mr. McCall: — It's always the minister's prerogative to say stay tuned to the budget. But you know, next year's budget, we'll take it, if that's what's on offer. So we'll be watching that one particularly.

Credit transfer. What's the minister's or officials' observation on the state of credit transfer in the province of Saskatchewan, SaskCAT [Saskatchewan Council for Admissions and Transfer] or the Campus Saskatchewan recommendation or the JTF or, you know, any thoughts?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We had some discussion about this before. This is a remarkably complex area. At first blush, it would appear that the idea of completing a program here or starting something and then taking your credits and using them somewhere else should be relatively easy to achieve. But some of the programs that a course was started in weren't intended for a course that it might . . . a program that it wasn't intended. So depending on where the start points are, what the nature of the overall program the student's in makes the transfer somewhat more complex than it might initially appear.

The institutions work together and, I think, are continuing to do work to try and develop more in the idea of credit transfer. And of course the province is supportive of anything that can be done in that area. But I will let the officials give you a more in-depth answer.

Mr. Urbanowski: — Good evening. I'm Reg Urbanowski. I'm the special advisor to the deputy. And to talk about the issue of credit transfer, we have started discussions briefly with the institutions. And I think that we are looking at what's new in the whole area of credit transfer, and it is tending to move towards the development of learning outcomes as a way of assessing, as opposed to traditional, conventional credit transfer which looks at time you served, that if you did so many hours for a course and you passed the course, that you would actually get the possibility of credit transfer.

So we're looking at a new way of doing things with that. We're just starting those conversations now. But that brings us into the discussion of recognition of prior learning. It brings us into the whole lifelong learning piece.

Mr. McCall: — So prior learning. How's that going to look?

Mr. Urbanowski: — Well again, I think we've got a number of fronts that we're discussing with institutions about new ways to rethink RPL, the recognition of prior learning, and rethinking the whole issue of lifelong learning as it fits into that. I think you're finding on different fronts that the notion of moving towards assessing people based on a competency, as opposed to an assessment based on the credit hour and the course that they've taken, is probably the way that things will go. That seems to be the trend that's moving across Canada right now. So I think that you'll see RPL moving towards a

competency-based kind of education.

Mr. McCall: — So in terms of the competency-based assessments, Mr. Minister, or officials, do you have an expectation as to when that will be the basis of a new approach to both PLR [prior learning recognition] or credit transfer? Not to be, not to sound impatient, but these are long-standing discussions and if there are examples from other provinces that can be utilized, I mean so be it. So when does the new approach come to pass here in this fair province?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — SIAST is a long ways down the road. I don't think I look at it as being a new approach or a change. I regard it as sort of an evolution rather than something that we've got a specific start and a stop date on it. SIAST has gone a long ways down the road. They're working with the other institutions. So I don't think we regard this as something that we're going to start and then have a finish date. We regard it as something that's continuing with all the institutions, and we want to give them some encouragement to work as hard as they can in the area, and I give them credit for what they've done.

It's always easy to say, well they're being territorial; they're being whatever their issues are; but I think when they sit down and they start working together to recognize programs or competencies that come out of another institution, I think they realize that the students that have started at one institution and have some prior learning can do it.

If your question is regarding members of the legislature, whether that should be recognized as any kind of prior learning and get any kind of credit for it, I've been here nigh on 10 years and I don't think you or I have a chance.

Mr. McCall: — It's almost like a demerit, Mr. Minister. But well thank you for that. And I guess, you know, I appreciate the evolutionary perspective. But if we're moving to something that's more competency-based, again if that's what this hinges on, I guess we'll be looking for the evolutionary watershed to come on this, Mr. Minister. And you know, I guess we'll take our chances in terms of our own sort of competency assessment at that point.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — You're point's well taken. And I think as a province we would like to see a better recognition, a better integration of programming, across the institutions. The history of the province is though that it's evolved over time with two universities, SIAST, and a number of regional colleges. I think if you were starting with a blank slate you might do something differently that had a much greater degree of . . . But the history sort of prevents it from going as fast or as simply as we might like it to. I think there is progress continuing to be made and from having a discussion with the officials earlier today, I know there's more work being done. Whether there will be, as use your word a watershed moment or not, I don't know, but we appreciate the direction and we share it.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Mr. Minister. Shifting gears yet again to the question of, I guess some general questions on our universities, Mr. Minister. And I guess just to get the minister's observations on . . . There's been some talk over the time previous where over the last months, years leading up to this, and it flares up from time to time, but the question of

disparity in terms of funding of the respective universities.

And the minister made reference to the MacKay report a couple of weeks ago in the Chamber and I think one of the things that MacKay had attempted to do was to address the question of respective mandates for the university, and potential overlap. We've seen that question come up again as regards the respective colleges of Education on the two campuses. And this being Saskatchewan, that whole question of fairness or the appropriate levels of funding and the respective mandates of the two universities is never that far offstage. So can the minister provide for the committee any observations as to where things are at in terms of the respective mandates and in terms of the parity and the appropriateness of funding for the respective institutions?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The issues that you raise are complex. We know that the universities — who enjoy autonomy, and we respect that autonomy — will sometimes lobby for funding and do a comparison where they stand or where they feel they stand with the other institution or institutions. What I've encouraged both universities and SIAST to do is: you put your case forward; you express your needs. We're going to work with you to address what the needs are. But don't regard yourselves as being in competition with the other university or with SIAST. You're really in competition with every hospital, every road, every other initiative that there is in the province. And to try as a tool in your funding submissions to try and make the comparison with where you feel against the other is a mug's game, and don't play it.

We want to hear from the institutions. We want to understand where they are. But we have a funding model that we use that the universities have signed off on, and they participate in their funding applications through that. So we set a funding level based on what the province can afford. And how it's spread between the two universities, I think it's a four-page formula as to the slight variations there are between the two of them.

So if we say we're giving a 2.1 per cent increase, there's some . . . the program . . . You may or may not have been aware of it during your time, but both universities have participated in the development of the formula. They've done it. This year it gave U of S slightly more, U of R slightly less, but in other years it's worked the other way around. The closest analogy that I can use, it's like a differential mill rate factor or something because it deals with utility costs and a number of those things.

So the model is there. We don't accept the premise that there is a disparity between them. By using the model, we'll continue not to have the disparity being there. I know my predecessor and I are both from Saskatoon and there's a perception that because we've had two ministers in a row from there that there's been preferential treatment given to Saskatoon, and I don't accept that.

We've applied the funding formula. We use it. And we're looking this year at significant capital investment in U of R for . . . [inaudible] . . . So we're, you know, we think we're there. We urge the institutions to work together to avoid duplication and I think Mr. Boehm can give you some examples where we've had programs where there has been duplication, where they've worked on avoiding the expenses of duplication. So I'll

let you address that.

[22:00]

Mr. Boehm: — All right. You know, maybe in the context of program duplication and that concept, certainly in the case of the larger programs like Business, Education, Engineering, it makes sense to have two programs because there is a critical mass of students that can drive programs that are of an economy of scale that it makes sense.

Where there are situations where there are fewer students, and I know the universities have talked about their, you know, particular programs, I know physics was one example where they're looking at opportunities for greater co-operation. So that both institutions may have a very limited number of students in that particular program. How can they work together, you know, taking the expertise at the U of S in physics, the expertise at the U of R in physics, and maybe looking at a combined approach?

And so again I think it speaks more to, you know, matching the level of service to the number of students and, where it doesn't make sense to have both program offerings at both locations, what creative solutions can the institutions work together to come up with. And again the physics notion is just one hypothetical example of an area that I know they've been looking at in terms of possible co-operation.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. I guess the same general topic but different question. In terms of the, in years past the provincial government, your predecessor, has endeavoured to come up with memorandums of understanding in terms of what the limits of tuition increases might be. If you could provide sort of general comments on what tuition increases will attach to the budget this year or, you know, will come in the wake of this budget this year, and then have some follow-ups on that.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We had in the past tuition memorandums with both universities, and they called for a cap. They were a multi-year agreement. They called for a cap usually in the range of, I think, four and a half per cent. We didn't renew the agreement this year. We encouraged the universities to be careful and cautious with what increases they had. We felt that by renewing the agreement and stipulating a four and a half per cent increase or some other number, we were effectively saying we authorize you to go up to this number and that that's what it would be. So by not saying a number and just saying, we expect you to recognize that students are not well-heeled, that we want you to give them the best value you can, they've both come up with numbers that were less than that.

U of S had a variety of different increases. And the College of Law was the one that had the greatest increase, and I think that's one of . . . They're trying to get closer to a national average. But the rest of them were all in a range of, I think, four and a half. So they would be in the same range had we entered into the agreement.

The philosophy that we have, and I suspect it would be similar to the one that existed under your government, was that students should bear a reasonable cost of their education and that that

cost should increase each year roughly in proportion to what the cost of living or the cost of education was.

Peter MacKinnon I think had done some writing in the area and felt that students should bear a portion of their education but that the cost of it should not be such that it's prohibitive or prevents them from doing it. There should be sufficient other supports in place so that the student is not precluded from getting an education by virtue of the tuition costs. And we think that, given the programs that we have in place with the RESP [registered education savings plan], the bursary program that we have, the \$2,000 a year, and by the graduate retention program, we're giving some good supports to students on a long-term basis.

The average debt that a student has on graduation is somewhat under \$18,000 per year. So I know to a student, \$18,000 seems like a significant amount of money. But we think that it's, given that we have the loan program in place for them, most of them, once they start working, are able to manage it. I know that's on average — that some of them will be more; some of them will be less. But we think, at this point, it's affordable. And our commitment is to maintain the affordability of it but at the same time, when Peter MacKinnon made the statement, that was where I was comfortable with it. And I think that's the position the province has had for some time.

Mr. McCall: — So what other metrics does the minister look to in terms of making certain that that is achieved, in terms of ensuring that that basic price of post-secondary education tuition is more or less affordable? What sort of metrics does the minister consider?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We have looked at where we rank on a national average and we're very close to the national average, but I think we wouldn't say that that's necessarily a sole or an acceptable measure because if the national average was too high, we may want to be less than the national average. But we know that if we're at or around the national average, we have some comfort that the other provinces are following suit on it. But I think what we look at is: is it our belief that the students are able to afford it as they're going in? When we talk to the students, when we talk to the universities, we believe that they are. We don't believe that people are being turned away for lack of funding. You know, we know that university isn't cheap, but we know it provides really, very good value. Depending on which analyst you look at, it increases an individual's lifetime earnings between 800,000 and \$2 million over their lifetime. If they're graduating with \$18,000 worth of debt, that's a really good investment. So we think we're at a place where it should be.

Having said that, going forward we know we want to watch it very carefully to make sure that we maintain the affordability. And that's why we've made the commitment through the bursaries, the grants, and by the graduate retention program, and also by now by the RESP. I don't know if the officials want to add something to that? Maybe on national averages.

Ms. Greenberg: — Well on the national, I could just speak to the U of S. The U of R actually hasn't released their tuition rates and won't until sometime in May. But as the minister said, actually the average tuition increase, looking across all of them,

is 4.5 per cent. But when you look at the . . . Most programs will see an increase about 4.6 per cent or less. Probably the greatest increase was Law, and they did that over a two-year period in order to bring them to a rate closer to the median of other peer institutions.

But even looking at their rates, they're actually lower than other rates, comparing other universities across Canada. So they're lower than the median of similar rates. And they compare themselves to what they call to the U15, 15 other universities who are medical doctoral universities across Canada.

When determining their tuition rates, they use principles. They look at comparability to peer institutions. They do affordability and accessibility and also making sure that quality, teaching quality programs are offered. So they set their tuition and try to use these principles as a guideline, as a guideline.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — You had asked about the measures that were used. Another measure is the portion of the funding that comes from tuition and what funds come from other sources. And I think Mr. Boehm has got a bit more data in that area.

Mr. Boehm: — One of the other metrics that we'll use to evaluate tuition levels and rates within the province is some Statistics Canada data that we receive on an annual basis that looks at tuition revenue as a percentage or a portion of the total revenue of the institution. And I'm able to report that for the University of Saskatchewan, when you look at its peer group of medical doctoral universities, it's tied for second lowest. That is, in terms of institutions and where they derive their revenue, tuition represents, is at the second lowest level of any medical doctoral university in that particular group for the U of S.

In the case of the U of R, in the comprehensive university group, when you look at total tuition revenue as a per cent of total revenue, in fact the U of R is the lowest. And so again it puts our two universities in a relative good light when compared to their peer group from across Canada.

Mr. McCall: — I'm painfully conscious of the time winding along here, but some questions I want to get on the record just to be certain. In terms of the debt loads being carried by the universities and particularly as regards the University of Saskatchewan, does the minister have any observations on the appropriateness of that? Or does the way that that debt load stacks up to other institutions give any kind of cause for concern?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We can tell you what the total amount of debt is, and I think we can . . . I'm not sure whether we've got a comparison with other jurisdictions. We know that the debt that the U of S has taken on is probably at the end of what their capacity is to borrow. The expenditures that they have made surrounding the Academic Health Sciences project, I think when a university or when an educational institution undertakes a project of that magnitude, it's reasonable to expect that a portion of that cost be absorbed by the institution itself. So the province authorized the university to incur that debt. They can't do it without provincial approval, as you'd be aware. And I think the total amount of the debt for that is, that was borrowed from . . . [inaudible].

A Member: — The actual borrowing is 60 million.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Sixty million was borrowed. They had some resources of their own so they've put in . . . The total project will actually cost in excess of a quarter billion dollars. I think it's, what, 260-some thousand? For Academic Health Sciences? And so there was . . . \$70 million was put in by U of S, of which 60 was borrowed. The rest was provincial money.

The project at this point is nearly finished. The work that's left to be done is the rework of A and B wing. I don't know if you've ever gone through it or not; if you haven't, you should. And that's work that has to be done over three or four years. You can't do it all in one shot with this.

But \$28 million left to spend? Is that right? To complete A and B?

A Member: — It's 38 there.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well my officials seem to be giving a plethora of numbers. Thirty-eight, \$38 million dollars left to spend over the next three to five years.

Mr. McCall: — I guess again, one final set of questions before we move to adjournment. But could the minister relate to the committee where things are at in terms of the College of Medicine, and when we can look forward to the College of Medicine getting off probation or getting on . . .

A Member: — Probation warning.

Mr. McCall: — Off the probation warning? The probation probation. Does the minister have any observations on that square and what that might mean for program offerings through the college either being sustained or eliminated or what's afoot in that regard?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I meet with the U of S president on this on a periodic basis. Of the issues that are around the U of S, this is one of the most important. This is a key program to the University of Saskatchewan.

The province has made a major capital investment in the Academic Health Sciences Building. That was one of the issues that was there. The process that put them where they are now indicated that they had a number of issues they had to deal with, some of them surrounding capital, some of them surrounding governance and administration.

[22:15]

The university president has worked with the faculty to try and get an understanding, and I think we've made a public announcement that they have an agreement in place. They've had discussions with the accreditation, I think, and they're waiting for a decision whether they would be placed on probation or a continuation. And I don't have an answer for that.

In the event that they are placed on probation, they would continue to teach, continue to operate. It wouldn't be the end of the institution, but it's naturally not surprising that this is

something they don't want to have happen. It's something that the university president takes seriously and is working with her faculty to do it.

I've asked her, on each case that I've met with her, is this an issue of resources from the province? And she indicates not — that it is an issue of governance and administration between the university and the faculty that are there, and that they want to work through that. So we will respect their autonomy to do that.

Having said that, of the things that are within this ministry, that is probably the one that is of most significance to us, and it's one we can't do anything with and we have to let them work their way through it. But it's something that we meet with them on a regular basis. The president is also new in her role and has had to, you know, some of it was there when she came on board, and I believe she is doing everything she can to get the problem addressed. Whether she will in the timeline required by the accreditation board, I don't know yet. But I'm confident that over time, she will get the problem addressed.

Ms. Greenberg: — The accreditation decision will come sometime this summer from the visit that they had in March by the accreditation body.

Mr. McCall: — In June, July, August?

Ms. Greenberg: — Yes. We've just been told summer because a report is being written up, and it's up to the accreditation body to determine when they're going to release their report. There was six individuals who actually visited the college on March 12th and 13th from the committee on accreditation of Canadian medical schools, liaison committee of the medical education. It's a long name. They visited the college, and so it's just now, I guess, they're writing up their report. They interviewed a number of people when they were at the university.

Mr. McCall: — One last question. In terms of the process, is there any kind of preview or sharing of information before the report is made public, with either the institution or the province?

Ms. Greenberg: — I imagine that there will be a few individuals, including the university president, who would be told the information before it was released to the faculty and the province in terms of that decision. I don't imagine there'll be a long time lag because people are eagerly waiting that decision for the accreditation.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The accreditation group does not report directly to the province, so the information we'd receive is from the university. And whether they get a day or two advance so they can prepare a response, I don't know. I can tell you when we receive it our expectation is it'll be made public forthwith.

Mr. McCall: — With that, Mr. Chairman, I would thank the minister and officials for joining us this evening for consideration of these estimates for Advanced Education. Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you. Mr. Chair, I would . . . I know you'll proceed to vote right away, but before you do that I want to thank the committee members, all of them, and all of

the people that are here, for their patience and indulgence, who got answers ready. And I want to thank all of the officials, not only for being here tonight but for the work that they do throughout the year. The province is well served by the officials, not just in this ministry but across the board, and I want to use this opportunity to thank all of them for what they do. And in spite of the fact that they groan and complain about how old they are, they are way too young to retire, and they can just keep on doing their jobs. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and thank you to all members of the committee. And I would ask for a member to move a motion of adjournment.

Ms. Ross: — I so move.

The Chair: — Ms. Ross has moved. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. The committee stands adjourned until Wednesday, April 17th at . . . Oh, the time is . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . 10:20 is the time. This committee stands adjourned until Wednesday, April 17 at 7 p.m. Thank you, all.

[The committee adjourned at 22:20.]