



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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Batoche

Mr. David Forbes, Deputy Chair
Saskatoon Centre

Mr. Mark Docherty
Regina Coronation Park

Mr. Greg Lawrence
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Mr. Paul Merriman
Saskatoon Sutherland

Ms. Laura Ross
Regina Qu'Appelle Valley

Ms. Nadine Wilson
Saskatchewan Rivers

[The committee met at 19:00.]

The Chair: — Good evening, ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the Standing Committee on Human Services. My name is Delbert Kirsch and I am the Chair of this committee. Also with us tonight is Mr. Greg Lawrence, Mr. Scott Moe, Ms. Laura Ross, Ms. Nadine Wilson, and Mr. Kevin Phillips, and Mr. Warren McCall. Tonight we will be considering three bills and then estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education.

I would like to advise the committee that pursuant to rule 148(1), the following estimates were deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services on March 27th, 2014: main estimates vote 37, 169 Advanced Education; vote 5, Education; vote 32, Health; vote 20, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety; vote 36, Social Services.

**Bill No. 101 — *The University of Saskatchewan
Amendment Act, 2013***

Clause 1

The Chair: — We will now consider Bill No. 101, *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act*, clause 1, short title. Mr. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And to you through the Chair to all members of the committee, I'm delighted to be here tonight. Joining me is Dr. Louise Greenberg, deputy minister of Advanced Education. She's just here to my right. Mr. Lindell Veitch is the executive director, planning, strategy, and evaluation. Brent Brownlee is the director for universities and private vocational schools, and Alicia McGregor is our senior analyst, strategic, intergovernmental and legislative priorities. As well I'm delighted to introduce Dr. Reg Urbanowski, and he is here to help assist the team. He comes from the ministry as well. And Mr. Brent Brownlee is here as well.

So I'm delighted to just lead off with a few brief comments. Mr. Chair, last November I had the opportunity to move second reading of Bill 101, *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2013*. As I have mentioned previously, these amendments will do a number of things, accomplish a number of goals.

First, they will correct the omission of the awarding of, quote, diplomas in the list of powers of convocation. That is section 11.

Next, they will clarify that outside of student members of senate, individuals elected to represent the senate are graduates of the university. That's in section 24.

Next, they will clarify the process by which student members of senate are elected. That pertains to section 29 as well as section 32. As well there will be amendments to the term of office for the senates' nominees to the board to allow them to serve a third three-year term. That pertains to section 45.

Next, there will be amendments to the powers of council

regarding the facilitation of the appointment of student members to hearing boards. That is in section 61. And amendments will also remove the requirement of a corporate seal. That is section 98.

The remaining amendments are rather routine in nature. We're happy to go through those during the course of our deliberations.

Mr. Chair, the University of Saskatchewan submitted a letter last year to the Ministry of Advanced Education requesting amendments to its legislation. The Ministry of Advanced Education has consulted with the University of Saskatchewan as well as the University of Regina on the proposed amendments. Both institutions have provided letters of support for the proposed amendments.

With respect to the University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Chair, the ministry has worked closely with the institution on the proposed amendments through ongoing discussions and deliberations with the university secretary. The University of Saskatchewan consulted with the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union and the Graduate Students' Association as they both provide letters of support for the proposed amendments.

The University of Saskatchewan also sent letters to the faculty association in 2010 as well as 2013, advising of the university's intention to propose amendments to the Act. The faculty association has not expressed significant concerns with the proposed amendments.

In closing, Mr. Chair, I would like to reiterate that while many of these amendments are rather routine in nature, the amendment to section 45 will help the University of Saskatchewan maintain continuity and expertise on its board, and that pertains to the leadership of the University of Saskatchewan.

I welcome any and all questions on these proposed amendments. Mr. Chair, thanks very much for the opportunity. I look forward to the deliberations.

The Chair: — Thank you. And Mr. McCall, I believe you have questions.

Mr. McCall: — I surely do. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Good evening to yourself, committee members, officials. And Minister, welcome back. Good to see you here.

I guess the first question I'd have off the bat . . . Certainly you've delineated whence this piece of legislation comes. Were there any detractors that raised concerns about the legislation, either with yourself or with your immediate predecessor, Minister Morgan, about Bill 101?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Chair, thank you very much. I'll defer the initial comments regarding the question to my deputy, Louise Greenberg.

The Chair: — Before you begin, I would like your staff, Mr. Minister, to please introduce themselves the first time they're on the mike, that Hansard would get the correct names.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Indeed.

Ms. Greenberg: — Louise Greenberg, deputy minister for Advanced Education. We had some correspondence on August 16th of 2013 that was to the Hon. Don Morgan. It was on behalf of a number of senators on the senate, and they discussed that they were all elected members, of course, of the university senate. They had some concerns in regards to the extension of Ms. Milburn's term beyond the legislative limits laid out in the university Act. They were also concerned about whether the present method for election by senate of two members to the board actually provides for ample or adequate representation of the senate body itself.

The letter goes on about that there is satisfactory elected representation from the university assembly, which is the faculty on the board, and also that the board member elected by the senate must be a member of the assembly. They wanted to make sure that:

Since the senate is an important branch of university governance, we believe that a careful review of these anomalies in *The University of Saskatchewan Act* ought to be made if the legislation is to be amended in the next few months, a commitment confirmed by the province in their July 10th, 2013 correspondence with the university.

We therefore respectfully request that a small group representing the signatories below be granted an interview in order to discuss further.

So that was the only correspondence, and it was signed by the 10 senate members at large.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Madam Official. In terms of addressing the concerns raised by the 10 senators in the legislation, how were those concerns addressed? What response was made?

Ms. Greenberg: — There was a letter sent on September 13th to Ms. Karen Rooney from the Hon. Don Morgan and, in his letter, he wrote that:

The legislation provides senate with the authority to elect two members to the board. It does not specify whether these members have to be members of senate. It's my understanding the existing senate bylaws do not require that senate appointments be members of the senate, and this was recently reviewed by senate where it was determined that leaving it as is enables the senate to select the best possible candidate to serve on the board.

As the senate has the authority to change their bylaws, the amendments to the legislation are not required. The provincial government still intends to proceed with amendments to allow senators to serve three terms, which is consistent with Lieutenant Governor in Council appointments.

Again I thank you for expressing your views and writing regarding concerns on governance about the University of Saskatchewan.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that response. Again in terms of . . . Were there any further requests for information or meeting made by the 10 concerned senators in this, referenced in this correspondence?

Ms. Greenberg: — It was discussed at the senate. I'm not aware of any further follow-up that was required. But it's really left in the hands of the senate because they write their own bylaws, and they have the ability to determine some of the points that were raised by these individuals.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. I thank the deputy minister for those remarks. At this time we have no further questions in terms of the legislation. So, Mr. Chair, if you're looking to proceed, please do.

The Chair: — Thank you. If there are any other questions or comments? If not, seeing none, we will now proceed with the vote on the clauses. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 10 inclusive agreed to.]

[19:15]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2013*. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I would ask a member to move that we report Bill 101, *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2013* without amendment.

Ms. Wilson: — I so move, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Ms. Wilson moves. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Bill No. 118 — *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Act*

Clause 1

The Chair: — We will now be considering Bill No. 118, *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Act*, clause 1, short title. Mr. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Great. Again thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Again and still, Dr. Louise Greenberg remains here at the table, Lindell Veitch is just in behind, and Mr. Darcy Cherney, the director of technical and trades branch, has joined us. Alicia McGregor remains close by and again Dr. Reg

Urbanowski is also here.

Thanks very much for the opportunity to speak about Bill 118, *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Act*. And I just have a few remarks, if I may, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, last November I had the opportunity to move second reading of Bill 118, *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Act*. As I've previously mentioned, this proposed legislation supports SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] as it evolves formally into a polytechnic institution. This legislation will accomplish a number of aims or goals.

First, it will change SIAST's legal name to Saskatchewan Polytechnic. This reflects the emerging status of SIAST as a polytechnic both within the province and recognized more broadly across the country. It will also ensure that other educational institutions cannot use the term polytechnic without approval from the Government of Saskatchewan.

Next, it will clarify SIAST's ability to fundraise for property. This is important as it continues to increase its outreach and engagement initiatives.

Finally, the legislation will also clarify the mandate of SIAST to reflect membership in Polytechnics Canada. For example, it outlines that SIAST may conduct applied research and scholarly activity, increasingly important not simply in the province but especially to federal stakeholders. And it indicates that SIAST may grant degrees in accordance with *The Degree Authorization Act*. Mr. Chair, this legalization will not substantively alter the relationship between SIAST and the Government of Saskatchewan. Mr. Chair, with the proclamation of *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Act*, the existing Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology Act will be repealed.

The Ministry of Advanced Education has had extensive discussions with SIAST in the development of *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Act*, and consulted widely with a variety of partners across the post-secondary sector, including the University of Regina, the University of Saskatchewan, our regional colleges, the Dumont Technical Institute, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission. SIAST also consulted with its students' associations, out-of-scope employees, SIAST Faculty Association, and SGEU, the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union.

Over the years SIAST has earned a reputation for the excellent delivery of quality education for both students and for its industry partners. This proposed legislation further supports the mandate of SIAST as it continues to evolve to best meet the needs of the new Saskatchewan, especially for our students and our employers. This is especially the case when we think about meeting the needs of our evolving economy, of our evolving workforce which today is more than 15,000 jobs on the SaskJobs website, and the evolving community or sector that is nationwide regarding polytechnics. Essentially this is going to help foster and facilitate, build on the strength of SIAST when it comes to making sure that there is an ease of transition between learning and earning for our graduates.

Mr. Chair, to you and the members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to be here to speak about this important initiative, and the evolution of SIAST. And I would welcome any and all questions on the proposed legislation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Mr. McCall, the floor is yours.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you for those remarks, Mr. Minister. I guess first off to the substance of the bill. Again, I hear some things being clarified and I hear of, you know, some rebranding. But how does this fundamentally change the mandate of SIAST? What is SIAST now able to do with this legislation that it was not able to accomplish before?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. Appreciate the question. It's an important question because it really provides us the opportunity to talk about the strategic repositioning of SIAST within an evolving post-secondary community, again both within the province and across the country.

First and foremost, we see the changing needs and demands of students, and this change to a polytechnic status is going to help foster and facilitate greater opportunities for students.

I'll be very explicit with just one example, and we're happy to drill down on this. As SIAST has become a member of Polytechnics Canada, student mobility is offered right across that range of the alliance and so by formalizing its position (a) as a member, and (b) as now having its Act aligned with that membership, this is going to provide students from across the country increased mobility opportunities, quite simply the opportunity to transfer with full credit courses from other institutions to SIAST or vice versa. With the robust job market that we have today, we anticipate that this is actually going to help us recruit more students into various programs from across the country. So student mobility is one of the key features that we think will ultimately help students.

It's also meant to facilitate and foster connectivity with employers. Again an example, an omission in the previous Act related to gifts or investments that can be offered to SIAST and now SIAST is going to have an opportunity through the polytechnics Act to actually receive those gifts and thereby positioning itself strategically to engage far more than it has previously with corporate donations. We've seen some very recent successes and we anticipate that those will continue to build with this rebranding, and so another omission that within the existing Act will be addressed.

A third component relates to an explicit focus on applied research, especially as it relates to Saskatchewan small- and medium-sized businesses, but certainly within other realms as well. Increasingly, and especially in Ottawa, there is an emphasis on the important research capacities of colleges and polytechnics right across the country. What we know so far is that SIAST, as it exists, has been able to qualify for the Canada Foundation for Innovation. It's also been able to qualify for NSERC [Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council] which is one of the Tri-Councils. Negotiations and discussions are under way regarding further Tri-Council investments in

qualifications. This is going to help cement and secure, as a polytechnic, some of those additional opportunities that will come through this strategic positioning. So quite simply, this strategic repositioning of SIAST is going to allow SIAST to play a lead role in helping to ensure that our students are well positioned to succeed in their studies and transition from learning to earning. It's also going to help make sure that the students are not simply succeeding in their studies, but are going to have increased opportunities on student mobility.

And there will be increased opportunities for, as a polytechnic, greater connectivity between the institution and employers, especially as it relates to specific investments coming from those employers. We think those are three tangible examples. Again each one certainly carries with it more detail. Those would be some of the specific benefits of this repositioning that we see.

Essentially and quite frankly, as Saskatchewan's economy continues to evolve, seen now as one of the most robust in the country, as Saskatchewan's labour market continues to evolve, and that is with record investments in investing in Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan students, inviting back our expat community which we know between 1970 and 2006-2007 ranged in the hundreds of thousands, and as well as inviting newcomers from across the country and around the world, we see SIAST, as it will be repositioned strategically as a polytechnic, we see it being in a position to actually help foster and facilitate further momentum within the economy by fundamentally focusing on the success of its students but also focusing on research and development opportunities for small- and medium-sized businesses, greater engagement with Ottawa, and greater engagement with industrial partners.

There's a small sampling or initial sampling, Mr. Chair, of some of the benefits that we see accruing through the repositioning and rebranding of SIAST as a polytechnic.

Mr. McCall: — How long has SIAST been a member of Polytechnics Canada?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — In the range of six or seven months.

Mr. McCall: — Was the name change to polytechnics Saskatchewan part of the condition of joining Polytechnics Canada? Is that part of the requirements for this association?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No, it's not one of the requirements. As SIAST came forward with the request for *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Act*, as I've said, there were a number of other benefits that were associated with this strategic repositioning, some of those related to Polytechnics Canada, others related to Tri-Council funding, others related to engagement with employers and donors. So I would say this strategic positioning simply reflects and reaffirms a new trajectory for SIAST, for the students, and for relationships with a number of external stakeholders.

Mr. McCall: — I appreciate that. And I guess I'm trying to work through, sort of, front to back in terms of the rationale that the minister extended for the name change. And again so just to be clear, it wasn't a condition of joining Polytechnics Canada?

[19:30]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It wasn't a condition. It was part of the alignment that SIAST sought. And this rebranding and repositioning reflects and reinforces that strategic positioning, both within the Saskatchewan context and, as importantly, within the Canadian context.

Mr. McCall: — So that, Mr. Minister, in terms of student mobility, say I'm a student at NAIT [Northern Alberta Institute of Technology]. How does this further facilitate my attraction to the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Great, Mr. Chair. I'll have Deputy Minister Greenberg lead off and then I'll come in with a few additional comments.

Ms. Greenberg: — Mr. Chair, one of the benefits of joining Polytechnics Canada is that there is improved credit transfer to enhance student mobility. Every member of the Polytechnics Canada has signed a mobility protocol, recognizing that credits earned at one institution are valid at all other member institutions. So this protocol will definitely help the students who are member of the SIAST polytech along with the 10 other institutions that are members of Polytechnics Canada that are situated across Canada.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — And if I could, I'd build on that. This is where it's important for us to be cognizant of some of the changes that have taken place across the country in other peer institutions as many of those have moved towards a more formalized definition and characterization of being a polytechnic. And so it's important, as far as making sure that that messaging and positioning is clear, that this is the new strategic space. As I say, I anticipate that there will be benefits both provincially and especially nationally, and that includes on the student recruitment side.

Mr. McCall: — So in the case of NAIT or the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, are you aware of any plans that they might have to change their name to some variation of polytechnic? The same might go for the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. Is the minister aware of any plans they might have in that regard?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. In fact I was able to accompany Dr. Rosia, president, and board Chair Ralph Boychuck to a recent mission to SAIT, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. And it actually has a technical name that now includes the moniker polytechnic. And so there's an example — a very specific one — of one of those two institutions that has already altered its formal name although incorporating that into a long-standing brand as an example of how they've worked in that direction.

Mr. McCall: — Well thanks for that, Mr. Minister. And I guess that leads to my next question which is, the SIAST brand in Saskatchewan and indeed in Canada is well regarded, so what consideration was made of changing the brand and not building upon it so much as completely changing it to Saskatchewan Polytechnic? Why wasn't some kind of . . . If SAIT's approach has something to recommend it, why was that approach not taken?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Great. Thanks very much. I think it's an important question. In fact, what I would not want to do is in any way foreclose on any number of options that are currently being considered for the actual rebranding of SIAST. There are many lessons learned from across the country and from a variety of institutions.

That work is under way, and so while this will offer a legal moniker and a legal title, it's not in any way to preclude the conclusions and recommendations that will come from some of the work that's under way on the actual rebranding that is an actual naming. That work will roll out subsequent to this initiative.

And so I anticipate that the work that's under way will actually take some of those very lessons from whether it's SAIT, whether it's BCIT [British Columbia Institute of Technology], whether it's any number of institutions. And we'll actually see a number of options considered by SIAST as they move forward with the new authorities included in this Act. That continues to be a work-in-progress and I'm looking forward to seeing some of the recommendations and what those will include.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Mr. Minister. We'll be watching and waiting as well. In terms of the individual campuses — and you think of SIAST Palliser or here in Regina, Regina's Sask Wascana — the individual identities, will those be retained in some way? Or I guess that's to get into the work that's yet to be done. But does the minister have any intel for the committee in that regard?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Again I wouldn't . . . What I certainly don't want to do is preclude or simply jump the gun on the work that's under way regarding the actual rebranding. And so I look forward to receiving some of the recommendations in the work undertaken regarding this very initiative. It'll be interesting to see what balance is, given aspects of both continuity and change, and we look forward to that being included in the broader package that'll be reviewed.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Mr. Minister. In terms of the cost of the rebranding exercise, is there a ballpark figure associated with that that the minister's aware of and could share with the committee?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. To date I anticipate that the investment would be in the neighbourhood of about \$50,000. That would be the hosting and holding of meetings and some of the work that's under way.

What I propose, Mr. Chair, if I could, is that we will get back to the committee with a more accurate breakdown of what that looks like and the categories and costs associated with the work to date.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. In terms of the provision in the Act, as noted as an omission in the previous Act, better providing the power to receive gifts of property and aiding the fundraising work of SIAST, in that regard, is there a specific instance that has arisen where that section of the Act was regarded as a barrier to receiving that benefit? Is the minister aware of specific incidents to date where that has served as a barrier?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. We wouldn't have a specific example, and certainly again we can get back to the committee after deliberations and conversations with SIAST.

What we will say is there are a couple of components to this. Certainly in discussions as the deliberations have come forward regarding these changes, certainly an expression from the institution has come forward. They want to make sure that they are legally onside, and they want to make that explicit. That's just part of their due diligence and good governance, and they want to be able to communicate that clearly. And so that would be a substantive element as it relates to the question.

There's also a symbolic element, and that is . . . As discussions are under way with potential donors, and those discussions are growing in significance, there's also a symbolic component here as far as making sure that this is helping to foster and facilitate some of that dialogue. And so what I would say is I think the institutional culture has been shaped previously by this parameter, and as the culture changes and the institutional imperative changes to look at leveraging private dollars off of the public investment — that was the spirit of the recent news release from SIAST regarding the budget — that they are looking forward to using the significant investment of public funds to leverage additional dollars. This change actively reflects and reinforces both in a substantive and a symbolic way this shift both in culture and now in statute.

[19:45]

Mr. McCall: — Can the minister identify the committee the specific section in the legislation that grants these powers or clarifies these powers?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Section 14, Mr. Chair.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much for that, Mr. Minister. As regards applied research and enabling the institution to better service the needs of small- and medium-sized enterprises, again how is that accomplished with this legislation? How's it changing something that was previously a barrier to a situation where it's now enabled or enhanced?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Again thanks very much, Mr. Chair. And I appreciate the question. It's an important question. Again with a couple of different elements to it, there are obvious substantive components. So building on a shift that's under way in Ottawa, and we're seeing increased emphasis quite happily in Ottawa where there is recognition of the research capacity through polytechnics and through colleges which complements the research capacity that has been established at universities, so we begin to I think in Canada have a far broader continuum of expertise that's recognized. So we are seeing some additional federal dollars, and those are significant. It's important for us to make sure that we're supporting the repositioning on this. So it's building on a couple of things. The Canada Foundation for Innovation has already been approved. NSERC has already been approved.

Some discussions . . . And I need to be careful here so as not to preclude negotiations. So I'm actually not trying to be vague here, but I also need to give the SIAST officials and executive

team some room. There are other conversations and deliberations under way regarding additional opportunities through the Tri-Councils. The Tri-Councils, they're not the only platforms to foster and facilitate research in Canada, but they are very significant instruments that the federal government would use.

There are also deliberations under way, and would be ongoing with other federal entities. And there are also opportunities for greater discussions with the private sector on both a local, or what we might call provincial basis, as well as a national basis. And again I need to be careful because the executive team at SIAST is actually doing some really good work, strategic work that they've enabled me to know a little bit about, but like many things, I need to be careful. I probably know just enough to be less than helpful and so I want to make sure I'm not precluding some of those negotiations. But they would include the federal government, the Tri-Councils, some additional departments in Ottawa, and then both provincial and national private sector entities. And they would also include partnership and collaboration with Polytechnics Canada, which is also very strategically positioned to help foster and facilitate some of this deliberation.

So I'm not trying to be purposely vague, just trying to say that some very good work is being done. The executive team I think is already seeing some real benefits on this front, even in the doors that are opening, in the conversations that they're being invited into as a result of the introduction of the legislation and the repositioning of SIAST within the province.

As a very specific example, SIAST, the president was recently invited to participate in — and did so very ably — on the skills mission that was headed by Minister Kenney. I had the opportunity to participate in a portion of that and I'll just simply say SIAST did a very, very good job and President Rosia did a very, very good job of representing Saskatchewan, and engaged in strategic conversations on the ground there that may bear fruit for our students and for others associated with the institution. Again happy to answer any specific questions, but I would say overall, it's already working as far as this strategic repositioning.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Mr. Minister. I guess one question comes to mind in terms of the reference to section 14, in terms of safeguarding the prerogatives at the institution. And certainly the minister has some experience with his ministerial authority as regards the section 14(2), the new section 14(2) which reads, "The polytechnic shall obtain the prior approval of the minister before acquiring or disposing of any real property." How does the minister anticipate safeguarding his interaction with the institution around the soliciting or the searching out gifts of property as anticipated by the new section 14?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. I'll allow Deputy Greenberg to lead off on this one.

Ms. Greenberg: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The way the new section will read, SIAST will still require permission from the minister before they acquire any new property.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that. With that, Mr. Chair, I have no further questions on Bill 118. Bill 119 of course is

consequential and further plays out the string of name changes, so feel free to carry us on down the line here, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you. And are there any more comments or questions? Seeing none, we will now proceed to vote on the clauses. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 40 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Schedule, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Act*. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

I would ask a member to move that we report Bill No. 118, *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Act* without amendment.

Ms. Ross: — Mr. Chair, I so move.

The Chair: — Ms. Ross moves. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Bill No. 119 — *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Consequential Amendments Act, 2013/Loi de 2013 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Act*

Clause 1

The Chair: — We will now consider Bill No. 119, *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Consequential Amendments Act, 2013*. This is a bilingual bill. Clause 1, short title. Mr. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Great. Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. To you and all members of the committee, as this is a consequential amendment, I will keep my remarks rather brief. But as always I'm delighted to answer any and all questions that come as a result as requested.

[20:00]

I will make sure that I am introducing once again Dr. Louise Greenberg, our deputy minister. Lindell Veitch is close by.

Darcy Cherney is close by, Alicia McGregor. And there are a number of other officials here as well. We're happy to have Dr. Reg Urbanowski beside me as well. Happy to make additional references to any additional officials that will be required.

Bill 119, *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Consequential Amendments Act, 2013* arises as a result of *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Act*. Consequential amendments are required to change the name from the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology to the Saskatchewan Polytechnic. Specifically these consequential amendments apply to two bilingual enactments, *The Education Act, 1995* and *The Teacher Certification and Classification Regulations, 2002*. These amendments are strictly technical in nature. And with that very brief overview to you, Mr. Chair, and to all members of the committee, I am happy to address any and all comments.

Mr. McCall: — As per my earlier observations, Mr. Chair, it's a consequential set of amendments. And as such, we've had the main body of our discussion in consideration of Bill 118.

The Chair: — Seeing no more questions or comments, we will proceed to vote on the clauses. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 4 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Consequential Amendments Act, 2013*. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I would ask a member to move that we report Bill No. 119, *The Saskatchewan Polytechnic Consequential Amendments Act, 2013* without amendment.

Ms. Ross: — Mr. Chair, I so move.

The Chair: — Ms. Ross moves. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Now I'd ask Mr. McCall and Mr. Minister, do you want to break at all, or do you want to continue right into the next? All right. We'll have a short recess.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**General Revenue Fund
Advanced Education
Vote 37**

Subvote (AE01)

The Chair: — Welcome back, one and all. We will now be

considering the estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education. We now begin our consideration of vote 37 and vote 169, Advanced Education, subvote (AE01). Minister Norris is here with his officials. Mr. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening comments.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To you and all the committee members, I'm delighted to be here this evening. To my right, Dr. Louise Greenberg, our deputy minister. As well we have Karen Allen, the assistant deputy minister, corporate and support services; Dr. Reg Urbanowski to my left, special adviser to the deputy minister; Ann Lorenzen, executive director, universities and private vocational schools is also here at the front with us; Mike Pestill, the executive director, technical and trades branch; Scott Giroux, the executive director, corporate finance; Lindell Veitch, executive director, planning, strategy, and evaluation. We have a number of other officials that I would simply propose to introduce if and as they are called upon over the course of the deliberations.

Mr. Chair, I'm delighted to be here to help offer just a few brief comments regarding the ministry's 2014-15 budget. And this budget invests in our students, in our institutions, and in our infrastructure, and it supports the steady growth of our province as well as it works to ensure the sustainability of programs and services that are key to an educated and skilled workforce right across Saskatchewan. These priorities are reflected in the plan and budget for the Ministry of Advanced Education. Mr. Chair, the ministry's budget continues our strong commitment to our students, to our post-secondary institutions, and to key capital projects or infrastructure projects across our post-secondary community here in Saskatchewan.

So with that, I thought what I would do is just highlight some of the key investment priorities that we've been able to move forward on. Advanced Education's 2014-15 budget is more than \$817 million, an increase of 3.7 per cent year over year. Post-secondary institutions are receiving a 2 per cent increase in operating funds the seventh consecutive year in a row under this government for an increase in core funding.

There is a \$2.6 million increase in funds to fully implement the expansion of the physician training seats in the province, as well as the addition of five more nurse practitioner seats. We have also allocated \$578,000 in new funding to double the number of perioperative nurse training seats at SIAST from 18 to 36. There are additional investments in the education and training of health professionals including \$1 million, for a total of \$5 million, in operating funds for the Health Sciences centre at the University of Saskatchewan along with \$6.5 million for further expansion and renovation of the centre.

Other capital investments in the budget include \$4.5 million to support the construction of the Trades and Technology Centre at Parkland Regional College and \$1 million for the ongoing construction of Southeast Regional College. These are important projects that will help the province to increase its capacity to train and develop a skilled workforce.

The budget also provides over \$20 million in investment for capital improvements, repairs, and equipment that are needed across our post-secondary community. We're pleased to

provide more detail on these projects as we carry on the deliberations tonight.

I do want to provide in some detail some of the measures that we are taking to ensure that post-secondary education is increasingly accessible and affordable to students. I want to highlight, for example, the \$134 million which is being allocated in support of programs for students, which is a 14 per cent increase year over year. This includes \$82 million for the graduate retention program where we now see that graduates, recent graduates from our post-secondary institutions are now contributing approximately 50,000 in number to the rolls that are helping Saskatchewan record our record population, at last count now over 1.117 million people.

[20:15]

At the other end of the spectrum, we've budgeted \$7.5 million to help families save for their children's education through the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings. We also have invested \$32.5 million which is earmarked to support grants and bursaries through the student loan program and nearly \$12 million in scholarships including the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship which is now contributing to the success of about 10,000 students across the province.

We're seeing some real and positive results from our recent investments in these types of supports. In fact since 2008 there has been an increase of 18 per cent in the number of Saskatchewan workers with a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree. That is, more people in Saskatchewan are gaining access to and successfully completing post-secondary education and skills training.

Regarding support for our First Nations and Métis students, that success continues for these students. Since 2008 there has been an increase of 25 per cent in the number of First Nations and Métis students in Saskatchewan who have attained a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree. In fact for that same period, since 2008, the number of First Nations and Métis students who have earned a university degree has gone up by 40 per cent.

Those numbers again, since 2008 there's been a 25 per cent increase in the number of First Nations and Métis students in Saskatchewan who have attained a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree. And in fact, when we simply focus on degrees, we see that that number has gone up by 40 per cent. While there is much more to do, we're seeing that there are some real signs of success when it comes to our First Nations and Métis students, their families, and as a result, our province.

Regarding collaboration in our post-secondary community, I'd like to just highlight and thank our partners across the sector for their commitment to excellence and their commitment to quality programming. Another aspect that they continue to do with noteworthy acclaim is that there's enhanced and increasing collaboration. There's certainly room for more, but we are seeing some important steps. For example, SIAST has agreements with the University of Regina, the University of Saskatchewan, and others that recognize credit transfers in more than two dozen certificate and diploma programs. In fact just recently, the Edwards School of Business at the University of

Saskatchewan signed an agreement with the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology allowing SIIT's business diploma graduates to have their credentials recognized by the university's school of business for its degree program. What's important about that is the only institution, university that recognized SIIT's work previously was not here in the province; it was the University of Lethbridge. This provides real opportunities for Saskatchewan students to succeed in their studies and succeed in their careers right here at home.

Also a growing number of partnerships have taken place between public institutions and the private sector, and these are contributing to the success of Saskatchewan's post-secondary community, but also the success of our students. SIIT's partnership with the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan has led to the creation of the student success centre. And its partnership with Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and Rockwell Collins on the aircraft maintenance program at the school is producing excellent results. To date we see 100 per cent employment coming out of that program, helping in that key transition between learning and earning.

The University of Regina has seen a record number of co-op and internship students studying and working in the past year. These partnerships and many more between institutions and industry are important to the success, direct success of our students and therefore the direct success of post-secondary community.

In closing, Mr. Chair — and I would be delighted to highlight many other examples of successes across our post-secondary system — I would add that with this budget we're working to meet the challenges of our growing province by investing prudently and investing in real ways in the post-secondary education of our students and, as a result, of their families, of their communities, and communities right across the province. We're working to ensure that there is that important balance of excellence as it pertains to our institutions and affordability and accessibility for our students.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I look forward to the deliberations that will be undertaken this evening. Appreciate the opportunity to be here tonight.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. McCall, the floor is yours.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, officials, again good to be with you to consider these estimates for Advanced Education. I guess just a word of explanation off the top, and this will be familiar for those that caught my routine last year. We'll be going through the estimates sort of on a line-by-line basis, thereby trying to capture the totality of what's going on in Advanced Education, and then we'll pursue more thematic discussion of these dollars under consideration here before us.

But starting with vote 37, central management and services, a slight increase from last year to this. Can the minister edify the committee as to what's going on in that expenditure?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. I'll refer this question to Deputy Greenberg.

Ms. Greenberg: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll provide the highlights for the central management and services (AE01).

The net increase is a result of three main things. There was an increase in hosting costs associated with the information technology system that the ministry uses to deliver services to clients of \$432,000. We had to correct . . . We had just over \$700,000 in corrections for accommodation costs that we give to Central Services, so there was a correction in our accommodation costs. And we had a \$17,000 salary increment.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Madam Deputy Minister. On the accommodation costs, the giveback from the ministry to Central Services, am I correct in that understanding?

Ms. Greenberg: — Yes.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Minister. Moving into subvote (AE02), post-secondary education, again we'll move through this, the allocation, sort of top to bottom for ease of, say, if the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook wants to follow along, for greater ease we can just whip right through the allocation. But off the top, operational support, if the minister or officials could describe what's taking place there for the committee.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. Again I'll refer this to Deputy Greenberg who will walk us through some of the specifics.

Ms. Greenberg: — For the (AE02), the operational support, the change, we had an increase of 46,000 or 1.6 per cent as a result of general salary increase and a realignment of salary dollars to reflect estimated salary expenditures.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Madam Deputy Minister. Moving through the allocations, universities, federated and affiliated colleges, again the minister has described it off the top in his remarks, but anything in particular you'd like to add regarding the expenditure under consideration in that subitem?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. I'll just highlight to an initial level of detail, and then we're happy to examine each area in greater detail. There's \$9.3 million or 2 per cent increase to general operating grants for universities, federated and affiliated colleges, \$2.6 million which would be an increase in funds to fully implement the physician training seat expansion as well as the addition of five additional nurse practitioner seats. As well there's \$1 million in operating funding for the Health Sciences Building at the University of Saskatchewan. Again each of these may offer an opportunity for us to explore the topics in more detail, but there's an initial overview.

Mr. McCall: — And I thank the minister for that. I guess this is as good a time as any. With the academic health sciences project, with this expenditure here, where will that leave the project?

[20:30]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. Again this question may have various components to it, but I'll refer it to

Deputy Greenberg to at least get us started and then be able to work our way through.

Ms. Greenberg: — This budget for '14-15, it's \$1 million of new funding for operating for the health sciences, which gives it a total operating of \$5 million for the Health Sciences Building. This does not include capital.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the deputy minister for that response. Again, knowing that we've got such little precious time, we'll just carry on through the discussion here. But in terms of I guess working thematically, a broader question under the heading of universities and federated and affiliated colleges, I guess, does the minister have any sort of statement of the approach of the government at this time as regards to tuition? In past there's been efforts made towards a tuition management policy. Sometimes that's been for a fully funded freeze, sometimes otherwise. Does the minister have any sort of statement of policy he'd like to make at this time as regards to the impact of this budget on the question of tuition throughout our university campuses?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. As I offered initially, I think we always work with that sense of balance, that balance that focuses on affordability and accessibility for students and their families. Our significant support for the students over the course of our government has been more than half a billion dollars. So that's one side of the equation, the affordability and accessibility.

There's also the base support for our institutions, and that is very significant. When we think about funding for post-secondary education within Saskatchewan, it's increased by 61 per cent over the course of our time in government. In fact, operating funding at our two universities alone has gone up by 58 per cent.

So we would put this in a frame of working to achieve that balance and with the knowledge that there is always more to do in that regard. But I think when we begin to focus on some of the strengths that I think the institutions see as well as the supports that our students and their families can participate in and benefit from, I think those are pretty significant.

And I'll just highlight a few examples if I may, and again we may come back to more detail in this. When we think about an increase in investment in post-secondary education, we think about \$5.5 billion. It's a tremendous amount of money, but we think it accurately reflects the spirit of the people of Saskatchewan. That is a very real, tangible, record investment in the fate and future of our young people.

When we begin to think about how that manifests itself in this budget, we can think about funding at the University of Saskatchewan which has gone up by \$13.2 million, or 3.7 per cent simply year over year in a year that by all accounts is a year that has been very tight to work in. When we think about the significance of the increase at the University of Regina, \$3.4 million or 3.1 per cent. At SIAST we can think about the significance of 2 per cent, and we can think about the significance of over a 4 per cent increase at SIIT, in the midst of again a very, very tight year. This is very significant when we begin to think about the capacity of our institutions and what

that offers as far as program excellence.

Regarding the benefits that come with increased student supports, and there have been many, we'll simply highlight again a few and, you know, we're happy to spend more time on this.

When we think about around 50,000 students . . . The number is actually closer to 55,000. The tax year is just about upon us as is graduation, and so at this point there's a bit of a crossover on fiscal years and the academic years. We know how significant that investment is in the graduate retention program, and I highlighted what that looks like as far as the investment to Saskatchewan families. We can also . . . which is in the tens of millions of dollars, and we'll highlight that.

We can also think about the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship which offers very real, substantive benefits to Saskatchewan students and their families, especially those that are considering a future course of endeavour. The message is clear. The Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship offers up to \$2,000 back for students and to the benefit of their families, \$500 per year. That's about a 9 per cent benefit when we think about what that offers on reduced pressure as it pertains to tuition.

When we think about the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship, we can think about a \$5 million government investment matched by \$5 million from corporations and across the community for a \$10 million initiative that offers real supports from those all the way from journeypersons and the apprenticeship program through to graduate students. Again, a real and lasting benefit.

And then obviously and most importantly, we see some of the support services that we've invested in. For example, with the knowledge that there's more to do, we also see that there's been significant support in things like an investment when it pertains to increased funding for student residence. That has gone up by more than 4,000 — 4,000 per cent. So when we think about new student housing in communities like Prince Albert, La Ronge, and Meadow Lake and Saskatoon, the construction that's under way here importantly in Regina, and we know that other communities are working hard as it relates to this issue alone.

So there are a few examples of when we think about an increase of 3.7 per cent, when we think about \$817 million-plus in this budget, we think about finding that balance, that balance in affordability and accessibility and also funding for our institutions so that they can maintain their focus on excellence.

Importantly there are very significant dollars that are now attached to the Ministry of the Economy that also provide support to our post-secondary sector, and that complements the dollars that we're speaking here tonight. And so I also don't want to overlook those kind of investments that also come from the economy. So there's a brief overview.

The frame is one of balance and working hard to ensure increased affordability and accessibility for our students and for our families, but also maintaining support for our institutions.

And I think it's important at this stage when we begin to think about feedback from the institutions, as we can begin to think about this budget, from the president of SIIT, Riel Bellegarde, who offered to me he was "pleased with the continuing commitment of this government when it comes to skills training and post-secondary education."

He was pleased "that SIIT is a key partner for post-secondary education in Saskatchewan," and he was "pleased with the government's investment in the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology because it helps students." That from the president of SIIT, a key partner.

From SIAST, March 20th in a media release entitled, "Provincial Budget keeps eye on future," "SIAST will leverage investment in polytechnic education."

The government's continued commitment to providing students with increased access to post-secondary education — despite competing demands — will help ensure labour market development keeps pace with employer requirements, said SIAST president and CEO Dr. Larry Rosia.

"We see this budget as an investment in the province's future," Dr. Rosia said, "Increased funding for apprenticeship training and for international student support, for instance, will help grow Saskatchewan's economy."

. . . "One of the ways we'll do that," he added, "is by leveraging public funding to seek more private investment."

And it goes to an earlier reference that I made regarding this source and sense of the importance, increased importance regarding leveraging.

If I could, I'll just continue from President Vianne Timmons, the University of Regina's president. This is a statement that was made to CJME NewsTalk, March 19, 2014:

We received 2 per cent in operating budget, as many institutions have in Saskatchewan. And when you look at that relative to other institutions and provinces across the country, we are in a favourable position. As you know, in Alberta last year they had a cut. So this is a positive thing for the University of Regina.

From the president of the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Ilene Busch-Vishniac:

We also fared quite well. We were given a 2 per cent increase today and continued support for important initiatives such as the Health Sciences Building. So we are quite pleased that at a time when the minister introduced a budget that is a decrease overall in expenditures, that we have been able to garner a 2 per cent increase.

[20:45]

Again, that's from NewsTalk, March 19th. We will continue to highlight just a couple of other statements that we think help to

reflect how this budget has been received as it pertains to this balance.

This is from the *Miner-Journal* from Esterhazy, Saskatchewan, Monday, March 24th. The title is “Parkland College happy with provincial budget.”

Parkland College is happy with the provincial budget. Parkland College is pleased with the contents of the 2014-15 Saskatchewan Budget, delivered Wednesday by Finance Minister Ken Krawetz.

... “We thank the Government of Saskatchewan for its continued support and encouragement,” Parkland College President Dr. Fay Myers said. “We are eager to begin construction on this incredible project as soon as the weather allows.”

And obviously today is . . . we still sit in an end of March that is breaking records, probably in the wrong direction as far as many people across the province are concerned, as far as cold weather. It was certainly welcome news to receive this kind of endorsement from President Fay Myers. She adds, “All this is good news for students and communities in the Parkland region.”

I think that gives a small sampling. There are some others I’m happy to just quickly highlight without taking too much time. From Steve Jimbo who is on the executive of the Graduate Students’ Association at the University of Saskatchewan, a tweet that went out from Steve Jimbo: “The U of S GSA are happy with increased allocation for the GRP in this year’s provincial budget. Thank you, minister.”

From Andy Potter at the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization and InterVac, the level 3 containment facility: “Many thanks to you and your colleagues for continued support of VIDO InterVac,” was the tweet.

And so you get a sense of some of the feedback that we’ve been able to receive both from students as well as institutional leaders across the system. And we know there’s a lot more work to do, but it gives us a small sampling of the kind of work that we’re seeing from our partners and how we continue to, I think, make progress.

There are also some comments from some students that have some specific relevance to the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship. And I’ll just ask for those to be brought up, and then I’ll be able to just highlight just a few of those and read them into the record for the sake of the students and their parents and the institutions from which they’ve come. An example of that should be forthcoming. We’ll come back to that in a bit as we bring those forward. There is just a brief sampling of the work that we’re trying to do in and around that frame of balance.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Chair, I think it was 10, 15 minutes ago when I asked you the question and it was about, what’s your government’s approach to tuition management? And all these other things you’ve touched on are fine and good and we can discuss those certainly here, but I’ve asked you a specific question and you’ve not been able to provide an answer.

You’ve got some 16 officials here tonight to draw upon to aid you in your regard of answering the questions, and you’ve provided me a recap of your Throne Speech or your budget speech debate speech. So again, what’s the specific approach of your government as regards tuition management?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well, Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to return. I thought that I offered a number of examples regarding that key term, that concept, that I think makes sense for people across the province and for our students, with the knowledge that there’s always a lot more to do, and that is that balanced approach that we have. And so I hope very sincerely that as I tried to offer up some evidence of the term balance, I think as a conceptual frame that answers I hope at least in part conceptually what that focus looks like: record investments, support for students that to date under this government has been more than half a billion dollars.

And again we can highlight some of those very, very specifically. We can think about the funding for post-secondary education, which has increased by 61 per cent since 2007. And then I’ve been able to highlight very significantly increases: \$13.2 million increased at the University of Saskatchewan in large measure because of the special responsibilities that would accrue to our only medical doctoral university here in the province, the University of Regina up by 3.1 per cent to help foster and facilitate some of the increased and expanded health programs among others at the University of Regina as it works in co-operation with SIAST. I can think about and I’ve highlighted some of the good work and investments at SIIT. Again that word balance, the notion of seven consecutive years of increased investment.

And so I would offer that. And there are many examples that I tried to highlight as far as the feedback so that it’s not simply a perspective being offered from a governmental vantage point. I’ve tried to go through and offer a number of perspectives. For example, the University of Saskatchewan’s press release relating to the budget and this being, “the University of Saskatchewan pleased with support from the provincial government,” highlight those kind of initiatives. The member affords us an opportunity to think about what an alternative might be, and when we think about the record of the NDP [New Democratic Party], that provides people with an option to look at what an alternative might look like.

So we can think about what tuition increased under the NDP. At the University of Saskatchewan between 1991-92, and 2007 and ’08, at the University of Saskatchewan tuition went up by 175 per cent. The University of Regina, tuition went up 144 per cent. Between 1991 and 1992 to the 2007-2008 year, tuition at SIAST increased by 336 per cent.

You can see that what I would say is an alternative, another option rather than a notion of balance, I would offer, is on display. In fact there were some years — and I remember this very well as I arrived in the province as a graduate student — 20 years ago the University of Saskatchewan saw a 4 per cent cut in its funding from the provincial government. The University of Regina, 1994-95, 4 per cent cut. SIAST saw a number of years where there was a cut. ’93-94, more than 4 per cent was cut. ’95-96, more than 3 per cent was cut, and ’96-97 less than 1 per cent was cut.

We can think of the graduate tax exemption program under the NDP which offered up to a maximum of \$5,500 back and was quite complicated. In a quite straightforward fashion, the graduate retention program is seen as one of the most successful youth retention programs in the country, with now a benefit accruing to about 50,000 families and going up, as I say, within days.

As the tax year comes to a close and the academic year is coming to a close, those numbers are going to increase very significantly. And so when we think about what that looks like, I think what I've been able to do, I hope in fairness to the member's question, is demonstrate a commitment to that balance as it relates to this government — record investments in post-secondary education, record investments in operating, record investments in capital, and record investments in support for students so that we have that balance, affordability, and accessibility for students and their families, and at the same time making sure that institutions have the capacity to maintain their focus on excellence.

I'll give you just one quick example. The capital at our regional colleges — colleges, we have seven of them across the province — over the course of six years, we as a government invested \$48 million in capital into our regional colleges. In the last six years of the NDP, there was an investment of 13 million, \$13 million, the previous NDP government over six years in our regional colleges — 48 million under this government, recognizing the significance of these institutions and the role that they play, the increasingly important role that they play in fostering and facilitating economic development, regional economic development, and helping to address the robust nature today of Saskatchewan's labour market, a labour market that on the saskjobs.ca website has more than 15,000 jobs.

There are a number of examples that I can draw from in attempting to make sure that I am responding directly to the question. The key frame for us is around significant, substantial, and sustained investment in helping to have that balance for students and their families, and for the institutions, record amounts, more than \$5.5 billion. And then we can look at, in a very empirical basis, empirical way, look at the track record of the previous government, the NDP, where I think there would be a notion of something other than a balance, and what I would call an imbalance. And that imbalance was more expense for students, fewer career opportunities for students. And for the province, we saw the net result of out-migration and years of stagnation.

And so I think our frame, our conceptual frame of balance, is one that is helpful in understanding what we've accomplished but also in helping to compare and contrast our record, which we will be held to account for, and the record of the previous NDP government, which is equally on display for the public record.

Mr. McCall: — Again to the minister, what is this government's approach to tuition management? And again, perhaps to provide further context for the minister for that question, Statistics Canada now regards Saskatchewan as having the second highest level of tuition, on average, in the country. So what's the disconnect here, Mr. Minister, if all of these efforts on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan via the

public purse are being brought to bear but tuition in Saskatchewan is still, again according to Statistics Canada, second highest in the country? What's gone wrong here?

[21:00]

And perhaps the minister, I'm sure, perhaps he could provide me some thoughts on what that means for the province, but how that again relates to the basic statement of policy that should be relatively easy to provide to this committee as the position of this government on tuition in the province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Chair, thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to this and to respond to the work of Stats Canada. I think, importantly when we actually drill down, when we had a look at what Stats Canada had to offer, it was important to keep a couple of things in mind. And so I'll work my way through this.

One of the issues regarding the Stats Canada piece was that it grouped together a number of courses and categories. And so when we actually look at this from a perspective of what it looks like for average tuition for an average student, I'll just highlight and I hope to cast into some greater light where our respective institutions — the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan — actually sit.

Before I do that — because I think it is pretty significant for us to think about the relative position of our respective institutions; I think it's very important for us to be able to do that — I want to highlight a couple of features. And I'm happy to make sure that the members of the committee, all members of the committee, get this. This is publicly accessible and available. It's page 100 of the 2014 university rankings from *Maclean's*, and while perhaps not perfect, it offers a relative ranking. And so when we think about affordability and accessibility and that balance, that frame of balance when we think about funding for institutions, a core part of the funding for institutions is about helping to increase the affordability and accessibility for students. And so if we think about where the institutions sit on this list, which is very significant, then you'll begin to get a sense of the efforts that are under way.

Operating budget, operating expenditures per weighted full-time equivalent student, that is essentially per student, where would our universities sit? There are two key categories for us within the *Maclean's* rankings. The first is the medical doctoral category. And when we think about medical doctoral universities in Canada, there are 15 in that category. And the University of Saskatchewan in the medical doctoral category based on *Maclean's* rankings, and again perhaps not perfect but relative in rank, the best-funded medical doctoral university in Canada per student is the University of Saskatchewan, ranked number one, \$15,444 per student. The next closest would be the University of Alberta, \$14,855, and they go down the list from there.

The second category for *Maclean's* relates to comprehensive universities, again of which there are 15 in this category. Mr. Chair, I'm happy to report that the University of Regina is the second best-funded comprehensive university in the country. Memorial is ranked above it. The University of Regina invests \$16,229 per student. Following it would be Simon Fraser, New

Brunswick, York, Victoria, Windsor, and down the list.

We wouldn't have a participant within the province in the third category, and that is primarily undergraduate.

The significance of this, this significance of this is that when we think about the *Maclean's* rankings, we can go back, and we don't need to go back that far, but we can go back to 2000, a time in the midst of the previous NDP government, in the midst of their time in office. And when we think about where the University of Saskatchewan sat, the context of which would be provided by the assistant managing editor of *Maclean's* at the time, Ann Dowsett Jones, and the context would be, "Saskatchewan and Manitoba universities, along with the University of Sherbrooke, Quebec have trailed other major universities because of low provincial funding," Dowsett Johnston said. This is in *The StarPhoenix*, the 14th of November, 2000. It gives you a context.

And where did the University of Saskatchewan sit? "The University of Saskatchewan has fallen to last place in its category in the annual *Maclean's* magazine ranking." The University of Saskatchewan, 15th place. It highlights an opportunity to compare and contrast. Again the conceptual frame, although perhaps not satisfactory in its complexity or in its depth for the member, but it offers an opportunity for us to begin to compare and contrast track records.

To the specifics, as we begin to look at apples to apples, the average tuition for the average student, I will offer a list of names that have higher tuition than our Saskatchewan institutions, thereby reflecting and reinforcing that indeed while Stats Canada offered a snapshot in time, it didn't actually offer a sound methodological approach that's informative for families. So Dalhousie University, the University of New Brunswick, the University of Waterloo, Queen's University, University of Toronto, York University, University of Guelph, University of Ottawa, Carleton University, University of Western Ontario, McMaster University, and the University of Windsor, all, all for 2012-13 and '13-14, all had higher tuition than either the University of Regina or University of Saskatchewan for average students.

I want to highlight this because again we go back to the *Maclean's*. The best-funded medical doctoral university in Canada per student is the University of Saskatchewan. The second best-funded comprehensive university in Canada per student is the University of Regina. We have two of the best-funded universities in the country.

And in fact tuition, although we know there's more to do here and it is not in any way an excuse for us to be inattentive or insensitive to our students, but on relative ranking. We see that we are, more accurately, we are in the middle of the pack. We also know that there are a couple of other features that are very important and they too come from Stats Canada. It helps provide a bit of a balance.

Tuition as revenue, as a percentage of total operating revenue, so that is when we think about public funding and then we think about the percentage that comes from students, we can see that, as reported by Stats Canada in 2013, the University of

Saskatchewan relies upon tuition as a second ranking in the country. Twenty per cent of the University of Saskatchewan budget comes from tuition. The only other two institutions that have a lower percentage would be the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta, and that's at 19 per cent.

The next closest would be a tie with the University of Manitoba for us, 19 per cent for the two Alberta universities, 20 per cent for the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Manitoba. And then it's at 31 per cent for Dalhousie; the University of British Columbia, 33 per cent; the University of Ottawa, 37 per cent; Queen's University, 39 per cent; the University of Western Ontario, 39 per cent; the University of Toronto, 41 per cent.

It speaks to the significance of that core investment in the institution because the more government support that's there, the less that we see the reliance on tuition. And we see very explicitly, this is in the medical doctoral category, we rank second in the country, second in the country.

Regarding the comprehensive universities, when we think about tuition revenue as a percentage of total operating revenue, first in class for the comprehensive universities in the country is the University of Regina. It's at 26 per cent. The next closest, the University of Victoria, 31 per cent; Guelph, 34 per cent; New Brunswick, 34 per cent; Simon Fraser, 39 per cent; Ryerson, 43 per cent; York, 45 per cent; Windsor, 45 per cent; Waterloo, 46 per cent; Carleton University, 46 per cent; Brock, 49 per cent; Wilfrid Laurier, 50 per cent.

Two of the best-funded universities in the country. Two of the least reliant upon tuition. And this takes us to provincial operating revenue as a percentage of total operating revenue. Again reported by Stats Canada, 2013, two of the best-funded, two of the least reliant on tuition. What about the provincial operating revenue? Medical doctoral university category: first in class, University of Saskatchewan. Sixty-four per cent comes directly from the province. First in class tied with the University of Manitoba. From there, the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the University of British Columbia, the University of Ottawa, Dalhousie, and the list trails off.

Regarding the University of Regina, first in class based on Stats Canada. First in class when it comes to provincial funding as a percentage of total operating revenue. First in class is the University of Regina followed by Victoria, New Brunswick, Simon Fraser, Ryerson, Guelph, Windsor, Wilfrid Laurier, and the list goes on.

Two of the best-funded universities in the country, two of the least reliant upon tuition, and two of the best supported through provincial revenues. It gives us a snapshot of what we mean within that concept of balance. We need to make sure that there is significant support that is in place for our institutions and they are among the best in class in the country.

[21:15]

That's not the whole story obviously because we know about the significance of when it comes to support for our students. I'll make reference to our news release as it pertains to this budget: "\$82 million in refundable and non-refundable tax

credits for the graduate retention program, an increase of \$18.1 million or 28.3 per cent. That's broken down further between Finance and Advanced Education."

When we think about the population that is now 1,117,000 and when we think about there now being more than 50,000 graduates benefiting from and participating in this program, we are talking about the significance of helping to grow Saskatchewan.

More than simply retaining students, we made sure — and I think there was consensus across the aisle on this — we made sure that this could also be used as a recruitment tool. And that's why we expanded it to include any legitimate graduate from any legitimate program in the world. We anticipate that this is adding hundreds of people to our population as they come here based on their work in other provinces and other countries.

As we sat down and we worked with a number of entities, institutions, and others, it helps to reinforce the importance of this work. The Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, \$7 million. We now have 10,000 students participating in the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, up to \$2,000, 500 per year, as they leave high school and transition into post-secondary education. This is a very unique program sending both substantive support, unique support to students and their families. That's the equivalent of about a 9 per cent break when we talk about tuition and symbolic support.

More than 15,000 jobs open and available today in the province, and we know that that's going to 60,000 based on our projections for growth in the growth plan. We know that the lion's share of those jobs today and into the future are going to require increased levels of skills training and education. Again another example of helping to work towards that balance, that golden mean. It's difficult to get, but I think that we're able to envision it, where strong support for our institutions and support for our students, record support, is actually having an effect.

I'll highlight as well \$32 million for Student Aid Fund to support grants and bursaries through the student loan program. We're also talking about \$5 million for the Saskatchewan innovation and opportunities scholarship, of which we've had a lot of feedback from students across the province.

Mr. Chair, I offer this with the full knowledge that there's much more to talk about, this balance, as we focus on making sure there's increased affordability and accessibility for our students. In fact I was just over at the accessibility office at the University of Regina on Friday, and I see the work that's under way there. And I understand, as we sat down with the students and some of those that help the students in tireless ways, in selfless ways, one of the first things they said was, we appreciate the support from the Ministry of the Economy in helping to make sure that this offers greater inclusion, greater accessibility. With the knowledge that there's more to do, those are tangible examples.

So in response, Mr. Chair, to the member's question . . . And I respect the member greatly. He's done an enormous amount of work in the post-secondary sector in Saskatchewan. We know

he's a former minister. I think there is real value in us speaking about that balance, about increasing affordability and accessibility and support for our institutions, working, and with the knowledge that, likely imperfect, although we continue to strive to reach that, I think we've offered very significant examples, unique examples to Saskatchewan, examples that are increasingly recognized across the country, and certainly based on feedback that we have from students and their families that at least point us in the right direction.

Students are able to spend more time focusing on their studies. They're able to spend more time thinking about staying in Saskatchewan than was the case previously. I hope that offers some indication of our commitment to that notion of balance and affordability and accessibility and support.

Mr. McCall: — Again it's hard to know where to begin in terms of response, Mr. Chair, to the minister, but we'll give it a whirl. In terms of the minister's . . . You know, we'd asked the question about Statistics Canada and whether or not Statistics Canada, regarding Saskatchewan as having the second-highest level of tuition in the country on average, was cause for alarm or some kind of sign that the laissez-faire approach, when it regards tuition, whether or not that was working.

And again I know conservative governments don't like Statistics Canada, Mr. Chair. But it's hard to figure out the track the minister's trying to tread in terms of, on the one hand, dismissing the work of Statistics Canada, and then on the other hand, marshalling it when it suits his purpose for other parts of the discussion.

And there's a broad discussion to be had about the measures governments can bring to bear to support affordability and accessibility and as well excellence in terms of the programs with the universities or with our colleges or pick the institution. But as regards that fundamental measure that Statistics Canada offers up on a yearly basis, the minister's ducking the question. He's not answering. I've asked him for a general statement of policy on the part of this government around tuition, a statement of policy that they've been able to offer in past, Mr. Chair, but goes wanting here tonight.

So I guess in some ways the arguments that the minister is making proves the point that tuition goes up when it's not a priority for the government to work with the institutions to make sure that a measure of affordability is there with the level of tuition. And if it isn't a priority for the government, then sure as the sun rises in the East, tuition will go up.

And we've seen that in this budget, despite the other arguments that the minister wants to marshal as regards the different levels of support that will be eroded by that basic level of tuition or the support for the institutions, that somehow alongside this unheralded generosity on the part of this government are themselves going through wrenching program reviews that have a huge impact on the programs that are offered and on what happens with our campus and what happens to the excellence that the minister proclaims an interest in. So I've asked for a general statement of policy from this minister on behalf of this government as regards tuition and that has gone wanting here tonight.

So I guess my other question on a related theme, Mr. Chair, for this minister: again if things are so good, then how is it that both of the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan find themselves in the midst of some pretty wrenching decisions as regards program offerings?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair, and I am happy to engage this discussion. I hope what I was working on doing was actually saying regarding Stats Canada, among other sources, we actually have to drill down. We actually have to look with some analysis at what is being reported regarding the specifics. And I've offered up, I hope, a number of Stats Canada . . . among other instruments, and so I'm afraid I don't think we can go by this without some comment regarding the significance of Stats Canada.

I've not dodged Stats Canada. I've made specific reference to the 2013 Stats Canada survey. I've said there was some methodological issues. I've said that here and I've certainly offered that publicly. The methodology used by Stats Canada to determine the provincial average is not the same as comparing kind of average tuition for average students. It's not an apples-to-apples comparison.

The Stats Canada work includes tuition fees from all programs, and that would take into consideration any number of programs, some of which are very specialized. So we can think about colleges of law or vet med and a range of others. And so what we've done is actually not dismissed Stats Canada at all. What we've tried to do is actually better understand where their conclusions came from and then drill further into the 2013 Stats Canada report and actually say, the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina are first in class when it comes to provincial operating revenue as a percentage, first in class.

Regarding that same report from Stats Canada, we can think of the University of Regina being first in class, that is, the lowest percentage of operating revenue coming from tuition, and the University of Saskatchewan being ranked second, number one and number two in the country.

Base funding established, reflected, and reinforced in *Maclean's*, the best funded medical doctoral university in the country based on full-time equivalent students. The University of Saskatchewan, the best funded comprehensive university in the country. Second best is the University of Regina. Number one and number two.

So far from actually fleeing from and trying to in any way distance ourselves from Stats Canada, we're actually trying to make sense of this and then trying to reflect and reinforce that in fact the universities, as far as base funding, do very, very well.

Then I've offered a comparison that this always hasn't been the case, where I've gone from *The StarPhoenix*, November 14th, 2000, and the report was the University of Saskatchewan has fallen to last place in its category in the annual *Maclean's* ranking of Canadian universities, 15th place, with not someone from the province but an outside expert, Ann Dowsett Johnston, saying, "Saskatchewan and Manitoba universities, along with the University of Sherbrooke, Quebec, have trailed other major universities because of low provincial funding." So we're trying

to, we're trying, without in any way ducking or dodging the question or the data, we've actually worked our way through this. We then, as a government, put a priority on increasing student supports; the graduate retention program helping students in very tangible ways, the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunities Scholarship helping in very tangible ways, the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship now having 10,000 students participating in an initiative that helps to reduce the burden specifically of tuition of about 9 per cent in very specific ways. There's a continuum of support, and I think we're okay.

Now the member made some curious comments about what this means as far as a government and priority for post-secondary education. We've made record investments and we know there's more to do and there have been some difficult choices, but seven straight consecutive years, \$5.5 billion. When we think about the NDP's record and we think about what the member has just said about priorities, I wonder what that speaks to as far as the NDP priorities.

The University of Saskatchewan's tuition went up between the early 1990s and 2007 and '08, 175 per cent. The University of Regina increased by 144 per cent, SIAST increased by 336 per cent, all while Saskatchewan's population was declining dramatically. Between 1993 and 1997-98, it was the NDP government that cut operating funding to the two universities by almost \$10 million. Twenty years ago, the University of Saskatchewan suffered a 4 per cent decrease in funding. University of Regina suffered a 4 per cent decrease in funding. The regional colleges, too often overlooked by the NDP, \$48 million in capital alone in six years by this government, 13 million in the last six years of the NDP.

[21:30]

I'm happy to turn my attention to the questions, but I needed for the record to demonstrate our sincerity and the substantive support that we are working to provide for our students. And I know there's more to do. I just met more students over the weekend, and there aren't many weeks that I don't have a chance to sit down with students and hear about that there are more things to do. But we're rolling up our sleeves.

And I think our track record demonstrates that young people in Saskatchewan are a priority when they're students and when they transition from learning to earning because the track record for too many Saskatchewan graduates was that when they were done their studies, well they contributed mightily to the provinces of Alberta or British Columbia or Ontario because there weren't opportunities here. And I think these are better days for those graduates.

Regarding funding for our two institutions, as I've already highlighted . . . And I think this helps to contextualize for the committee members I hope two of the best-funded universities in the country. When it comes to the question of their program reviews, we see that funding for the two universities is up by 58 per cent since 2007-08. Compared to 2007-08 and when we had the opportunity to first form government, operating funding to the University of Regina is up 40 per cent, and at the University of Saskatchewan, it's up 65 per cent, the difference being largely the contribution and commitment to the health sciences and some of the intensive research centres of excellence. These

are significant, but even outside that, we see very significant increases, again with the knowledge that there's more to do. And I approach this with real humility. I know that there's more to do. These are sources of inspiration for us and for our students and for our scholars and for our researchers. And I know that there's more to do.

Regarding the University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina, both of these institutions are independent institutions, and that's important for us to take account of. They are accountable to the government. They're accountable to people across the province, but they're also accountable to their own boards.

And so when we think about some of the priorities that they're working their way through ... At the University of Saskatchewan, for example, we are in the midst of the TransformUS process, and we shall see what that looks like as it rolls out. That rollout is in a phase that has not yet reached implementation. So we'll give the university the benefit of the doubt, including all its deliberative processes — through council, through senate, through the board — and respect the processes that are under way while at the same time being attentive to and listening to the concerns of those that come forward, but respecting the independence.

As far as the University of Regina and its program review, again it's with respect to the University of Regina and the independence of the governance structure as well as, you know, the obvious competence. To the University of Regina, you know, I tip my hat because enrolments continue to go up. And I think we're seeing some very real and significant areas of progress. Not easy, not easy by any account but as a frame, one that is supportive of the institutions, supportive through funding but also in recognition of their independence of action, that balance between being responsible to citizens across the province and also responsible in governance and respecting that independence.

And again that's about being prudent and trying to make sure that the institutions are able to make the best decisions for themselves while being attentive to the needs of the province. And that's a constant work-in-progress.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for the answer. Again in the interest of our precious time here to ask some of these questions, I guess my question right now would skip down in (AE02). The minister has touched on other aspects of the sector in his wide-ranging responses certainly, but as regards post-secondary capital transfers, it seems to me last time I was in this committee with the minister he was talking about the importance of setting priorities in capital in the post-secondary sector. And it seemed at that time the minister — this is again, you know, 2008-2009 — the minister was working on a system of prioritizing capital in the sector.

So I guess a general question off the top. The capital decisions that were made in this budget, how were those deemed to be worthy of support? And how is it decisions alongside that such as, oh, the College Avenue Campus request from the University of Regina or the University of Regina residence request for support, how do those requests for support from this government fall off the board? And how are other capital and

again very worthwhile capital projects ... What's the decision process that the minister engages in in terms of what's getting capital support in this budget and what is not?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. There are some key principles that we work to focus on, and I'll turn the discussion at least initially to Deputy Minister Greenberg. And then I'll pick up on the specific questions as they relate to College Avenue Campus and the \$11 million provincial investment which is under way in a new residence at the University of Regina. I am happy to continue with that. But Deputy Greenberg, why don't you start?

Ms. Greenberg: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. There's a criteria that I used in the ranking of new initiatives, and I will go through the eight.

First, a strategic alignment with the 2013-14 Ministry of Advanced Education's plan, and this includes the '13-14 government goals, the plan for growth, and more specific provincial regional strategy. Second is strategic alignment specifically with improving employment and education outcomes for First Nation and Métis people. Third is needs such as labour market. Fourth is needs such as student demand.

Next is feasibility or reasonability of initiative to address stated objectives in an efficient, effective, sustainable manner. Next is non-government contribution including community, institution, private, or industry. Next is implications of risk of not moving forward to ministry, government, and institution. And last is implications or risk of not moving forward to learners, the public employers, and other institutions or jurisdictions. So these are the eight criteria that are used in determining new initiatives as presented.

Mr. McCall: — Just a point of clarification if I could from the deputy minister, Mr. Chair. Is there a point system awarded out of the eight criteria? And is there a list that is then compiled and I'm sure adjudicated alongside existing resources, or how does that work?

Ms. Greenberg: — Mr. Chair, it's a work-in-progress. We started this two years ago, developing the scoring system and these eight criteria. We've developed a maximum of 40 points that we started to use. So it's a new venture for us and a work-in-progress.

[21:45]

Mr. McCall: — In that regards, Madam Deputy Minister, is there an overall list? I'm sure there's one compiled by the ministry for internal use and certainly for budgetary planning. But is that list made available in the manner that the old K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] capital, education capital list used to be made public?

Ms. Greenberg: — We don't have a list that's a public list such as the K to 12 does. We've been working on the list, and it's just right now we were just been giving it as advice to the minister.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. I guess I'm a bit surprised at that, given the vehemence with which the minister made the point years

back now. But I guess we'll be looking for progress on this front in the days and weeks and months ahead. But does the minister have something he'd like to add on the College Avenue Campus and the University of Regina residence request?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I would. First of all I appreciate, certainly appreciate the questions on the overall capital priorities. That's never easy to do, and I just want to applaud the officials over the course of the last couple of years as we've begun to pull the methodology together. And it is a work-in-progress, but I think we're actually making some pretty significant progress here.

I think the investments across the province help to reflect that kind of evolution. When we think about the course of our time in office that we've had the honour and opportunity of serving, we've invested more than \$433 million in capital funding across our post-secondary community, which is very, very significant and, as I've highlighted, that manifests itself from regional colleges to our university campuses to SIAST.

I would be remiss if I didn't add a special thanks here to the federal government because we were enabled to move forward on a number of initiatives through the knowledge infrastructure program. It was about \$117 million across 21 different projects. And so I want to make sure that we highlight the significance of that partnership with Ottawa and that initiative which helped us to do some in some ways remarkable but in other ways rather routine things. We were able to fix roofs as well as expand campuses. And so I just want to make sure we have that on the record.

Regarding the residence, we've been able to invest over the course of the last couple of years \$11 million in that initiative. Again the context of this, and this is very, in my opinion, this is significant again just empirically, we've increased as a government, since first coming to office, funding for student residence has gone up by more than 4,000 per cent, and we know there's more to do.

So when we think about the \$11 million that's been invested here at the University of Regina, we know that that work is now under way. In fact I had an opportunity today. I was out for, I was able to get out for a bit of a run around the lake, and the two most significant and prominent features now as you kind of round the corner, it's nice to see the cranes up and operational and the work under way. And so I want to say a special thanks to those that are doing that work, especially in this weather. We know it hasn't been easy as far as a construction season and we know it, certainly today, that cold has extended significantly.

So there's more to do at the University of Regina. That's part of a continuing conversation. I would highlight that the investment stands in stark contrast . . . The investment of \$11 million to date, construction under way. This is going to be a very significant housing initiative not simply for the campus but we know what happens. More students are able to live on campus which frees up other spots in the community so that there are more spaces. This one stands in pretty, I think, stark contrast at least so far with an initiative by the previous NDP government.

And in fact, the 29th of August, 2002, we know that a decision was taken regarding moving forward on the construction of

residence at the University of Regina. And we've got some documentation and it reads precisely. In fact, it's pertaining to a decision that was taken by the previous government and it relates to authorizing the University of Regina to incur a liability of up to \$35 million in the form of a loan on such terms, conditions, and prices that the University of Regina board of governors considers advisable to finance the erection, furnishing, and equipping of student residence.

I just want to highlight that while we have certainly more work to do and that's part of an ongoing discussion, \$11 million has already been invested in this University of Regina initiative and that stands in some contrast to another kind of direction that the previous NDP government took on a previous residence on that campus. And so I just want to highlight that, and I think it just speaks to again the sincerity of our efforts. We have had a tough, tight budget year and at the same time we continue to see real progress under way. The \$11 million is there and is helping to foster and facilitate and fuel the construction.

So my first point is that there has been a real investment. Is there more work to do exploring any range of options? Yes, yes, there is and that's part of a dialogue.

As for the College Avenue Campus, this dialogue I think has progressed very significantly under the leadership of President Vianne Timmons, and I want to applaud her work and the work of the board and her team. That campus did not come in need of repair overnight. That campus has taken a long, long, long time to get to where it is, and I want to applaud the efforts of those that are moving forward.

I also want to say that, you know, there may be opportunities here for increased private sector or community investment, and I wouldn't want to in any way kind of comment out beyond just how pleased and appreciative we are of the University of Regina's work in this endeavour. And I know that that's part of an ongoing project and certainly part of an ongoing dialogue with our government as well, and so I just want to applaud the University of Regina for the initiative that's under way. And we all look forward to better days ahead, and I applaud the approach that's undertaken. Again what I don't want to do is in any way jeopardize the great work and the many dialogues that are certainly in motion at this time. So not overlooked on a strategic level — just one of those that continues to be a work-in-progress.

Mr. McCall: — So where did it rank in terms of the, you know, bearing in mind that your methodology's a work-in-progress, on rating capital? The College Avenue Campus request from the University of Regina, where did that rank in terms of your methodology and making decisions in this budget process?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. And I'll turn this to Deputy Greenberg. It's part of an ongoing dialogue, a healthy dialogue with the University of Regina.

Ms. Greenberg: — For the past year and a half, we've been having discussions. I've had discussions with the president about some of her visions and some of her ideas on what the College Avenue Campus should look like, and it's an ongoing dialogue. I think there's still work to do on the planning and also on the availability of what the buildings could look like and

some of the other opportunities and including other partners that she should be engaging with at this time.

Mr. McCall: — For the record, Madam Deputy Minister, can you outline what those other partners might be?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. The easy answer is at this time, no, we can't. And that's in reference and respect to the University of Regina. We have had some discussions, but that kind of detail has not been shared. And we're comfortable with that given the very serious nature of the deliberations that the university's carrying out, and the last thing we want to do is in any way jeopardize or get in the way of those kinds of deliberations. I've been given every reassurance that they are substantive and they are serious deliberations.

Mr. McCall: — I guess just one last thing on the question of the College Avenue Campus and generally capital, but particularly as regards to the University of Regina. I'm glad the minister is applauding the actions of President Timmons and the University of Regina community. And certainly that community has come forward with significant support on their own steam, Mr. Minister. And again that fundraising effort is something that individuals look to see what part their government is playing for a very important initiative on the part of the University of Regina. So applause is fine, Mr. Minister, but they're looking for support. They didn't find it in this budget. So should they be looking to next year's budget? Should they be looking to an interim measure? What is the timeline, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I appreciate the spirit of the question because I think the spirit of the question is one that is supportive and that's important for us to acknowledge. I think it's, given the significance of the discussions that are under way, I think the issue is best left with the University of Regina as these discussions are under way. And you know, I think certainly we want to make sure there is real regard in the marking of progress for the University of Regina in this regard.

[22:00]

Again I'll simply take the spirit as one of support with the knowledge that there were probably many, many, many, many years of NDP government when there was an opportunity to help address this capital need. I applaud the social entrepreneurship that's being demonstrated and displayed by the University of Regina, and I think this is really heading in an important direction for the campus but also for the community.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for the response. Just to a quick sort of tangent arising out of that round of questioning, Mr. Minister, in terms of, you've evinced a concern for the debt levels of the institutions. Can you tell the committee where the debt levels are at for the institutions and whether or not you regard there to be any cause for concern?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks, Mr. Chair, I'll turn this over to Deputy Greenberg to walk through.

Ms. Greenberg: — The University of Saskatchewan has approximately \$190 million in debt mainly with their lending

institutions. This debt goes back over a great number of years. It covers residence. It covers parking. It covers some older buildings. U of R [University of Regina] has about \$155 million in debt, and that includes the borrowing to fund the construction of the new residence. There's a parkade. There's a daycare facility on campus. So that's the background for both of these.

Mr. McCall: — Just a secondary question on that to either the deputy minister or the minister, in terms of comparable institutions, is there any cause for concern on the level of debt for the institution?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — What we know is that — and this is important given the independence of the institutions and their work with other financial institutions — is that both boards are comfortable with where they sit. We don't have specific comparisons across the country. And in fact it's again something that I've actually been looking at, how can we begin to get a bit of a baseline, kind of what's going on across the country for this. But at this point the respective boards are comfortable with their relative positions, and that serves sufficiently for us, but work to do, I think, more broadly based about the relative ranking.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Minister and officials for that response. In consultation with the Chair and noting the hour of the evening and noting that we've got some ways to go before we reach completion of estimates for Advanced Education, I turn it back over to the Chair, first noting thanks for the minister and officials — the great many officials that have joined us here tonight — and members of the committee for the work here before us this evening. But with that, Mr. Chair . . .

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, if you have any closing remarks.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No. To all members of the committee as well as yourself, Mr. Chair, I want to say thank you very much for the interest in post-secondary education in Saskatchewan. I would also like to add my thanks to the officers of this Legislative Assembly that allow us to do our work into the evening, well into the evening. And I know that's time away from their families as well. So a special thanks to everyone that's enabled us to do our work this evening.

The Chair: — Thank you, one and all. At this time I would ask a member for a motion of adjournment. Ms. Wilson has moved. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. The committee now stands adjourned until the next call of the Chair. Thank you, one and all.

[The committee adjourned at 22:09.]