



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 25 – April 12, 2017



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-Eighth Legislature

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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Ms. Nicole Rancourt, Deputy Chair
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Mr. Mark Docherty
Regina Coronation Park

Mr. Muhammad Fiaz
Regina Pasqua

Mr. Hugh Nerlien
Kelvington-Wadena

Hon. Nadine Wilson
Saskatchewan Rivers

[The committee met at 19:00.]

The Chair: — I'd like to call this meeting of the Human Services Committee to order. With us this evening we have MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Buckingham, MLA Docherty, MLA Fiaz, MLA Nerlien, MLA Wilson, and substituting for MLA Rancourt is MLA Meili. I'd like to welcome you all here this evening.

**General Revenue Fund
Advanced Education
Vote 37**

Subvote (AE01)

The Chair: — Today we are considering the estimates and March supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education, vote 37 and 169. We can now begin our considerations. Madam Minister, welcome, and if you would please introduce your officials and commence with your opening remarks. I would ask that the officials state their name when they respond to questions. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you for this opportunity to speak to you in your committee about the Ministry of Advanced Education budget for 2017-18. So to introduce then the members of the Advanced Education team: Angela Currie, my chief of staff; David Boehm, acting deputy minister — welcome David to your first estimates in this capacity; Tammy Bloor Cavers, assistant deputy minister, sector relations and student services; Scott Giroux, acting assistant deputy minister, corporate services and accountability; Brent Brownlee, acting executive director, universities and private vocational schools branch; Mike Pestill, executive director, technical and trades branch; Todd Godfrey, director, capital planning branch.

And I just wanted to say to a special viewer at home, Louise Greenberg, who is here in spirit, former deputy minister of Advanced Education, we just want to thank her for her 32 years of service. I'd also like to welcome of course panel members, my colleagues from the legislature, Hansard. And to Mr. Meili and Mr. Vermette, welcome to your first estimates — not Mr. Vermette's, of course. And we will proceed with opening remarks.

Mr. Chair, this year's budget of over \$716 million for Advanced Education will help Saskatchewan meet its fiscal challenge. It continues to invest in students and post-secondary institutions while controlling costs. We have maintained strong support for students through programs such as the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship and the graduate retention program. Government is investing nearly 137 million this year in direct supports for students. We will provide considerable support, nearly 650 million to post-secondary institutions, which is a continuation of a pattern we established in our first budget 10 years ago.

Over the last decade we've invested \$8.3 billion in post-secondary education and student supports. This year we have revitalized the student loans program to make it more transparent and fair. We continue to invest in First Nations and

Métis post-secondary institutions and programs, and we're providing capital dollars so that post-secondary institutions can continue to invest in preventative maintenance and repairs.

In terms of student supports, again this year, as we have been for a decade, our ministry is strongly committed to our students. We're investing 9 million in the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship. That scholarship provides \$500 per year of direct tuition relief to Saskatchewan high school graduates. Since its inception five years ago, the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship has provided 33 million in tuition relief to nearly 32,000 students. It will assist roughly 21,000 students this year. And it's seamless; there's no application. There are no forms to fill out. If you graduated from high school in Saskatchewan, the scholarship is simply there to reduce tuition and to help you pay for your education.

We're also investing 3 million in Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarships. These awards are targeted at emerging fields of study, priority areas for institutions, and for international education. Over the years more than 19,000 SIOS [Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship] scholarships have been awarded and, Mr. Chair, this budget continues to provide tuition refunds to thousands of graduates through our graduate retention program.

Since its inception, more than 70,000 highly trained professionals have benefited by choosing to establish careers right here in Saskatchewan. The program, the GRP [graduate retention program] program provides income tax credits of up to 20,000 for graduates who live and work here, supporting our economy. This year the program will provide close to 91 million in tuition rebates. Those rebates will help Saskatchewan employers recruit and retain graduates. Since its launch in 2008, \$345 million in GRP credits have been paid to attract and keep highly trained graduates in Saskatchewan.

For the first nine months of this fiscal year, we will also help students and parents save for post-secondary education through the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings, or SAGES. The program tops up registered education savings by 10 per cent. Families can receive up to \$250 per child this year. That's a commitment of \$8 million in this budget to help families pay for school.

Since the program launched three years ago, 58,000 students have received more than 23 million in support from SAGES. I must point out, Mr. Chair, that because of financial challenges, we will be suspending SAGES on January 1, 2018. This program will resume when the province's financial situation improves.

Mr. Chair, scholarships and savings are important supports for students, but some people need more assistance, and that's why we're investing \$26 million in the Student Aid Fund to provide loans and grants. Nearly 30 per cent of what we lend to students never has to be repaid, and we've revamped our student loans program to make it more transparent and more responsive. And I will take you through some of those details.

In terms of student loan changes, in August we will introduce a new system of upfront grants for students. The new provincial

grant of up to \$1,000 will provide students with predictable funding, and we've targeted it to those students who need the most support. Our new grant is based on student and family income. It replaces a complex and confusing system with one that is simple, more fair, and predictable. Lower income students in a typical eight-month program will receive about \$4,000 in combined federal and Saskatchewan grants. Combined with the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, students could qualify for up to 4,500, and students will know in advance what funding is available for their post-secondary education, which will allow them to make plans.

Mr. Chair, we also believe post-secondary education is a shared responsibility. The new system will ask students to make a fixed contribution to their education. The contribution will be reasonable, ranging from 1,500 to \$3,000 per year depending on the financial situation of students and their parents. The fixed contribution will allow students to work and gain valuable experience without having to worry that their financial assistance will be reduced if they earn too much. The change will shift the burden of debt among students. Students with more limited means will finish their studies with less debt to repay. Those who can afford to pay a bit more will pay a bit more. One of our five expectations of the post-secondary education sector is accessibility. This change will help keep education accessible to people with lower incomes.

In light of our fiscal challenge, Mr. Speaker, we are eliminating education and tuition tax credits on July 1, and we're not the only government making this decision. The federal government has eliminated its education tax credit. The provinces of Ontario and New Brunswick have eliminated education and tuition tax credits as well. BC [British Columbia] is proposing to end its education tax credit at the end of this year. And keep in mind, Mr. Chair, what I mentioned earlier: we have maintained our generous system of tax credits under the graduate retention program. Independent analysts say undergraduate tuition in Saskatchewan ends up being completely reimbursed through the GRP in many cases to graduates who live and work here after their studies.

In terms of funding to post-secondary institutions, Mr. Chair, post-secondary institutions will receive \$649 million in operating and capital money in this budget. That reflects a 5 per cent across-the-board reduction in grants to our post-secondary institutions. We have to get back to sustainable budgets, and we have a record of record support for post-secondary institutions over the last decade.

After factoring in this year's budget, we have increased operating funds to our universities 45 per cent over those 10 years. That's twice the rate of inflation. The University of Saskatchewan has seen an increase of more than 47 per cent. Operating grants to the University of Regina have grown by more than 38 per cent. Because of the strong support we've given in good times, Mr. Chair, we can now stand on our record when the budget has become more challenging, and this ministry is leading by example. We've cut our own budget by 5 per cent through reductions in administration and special projects.

On capital spending, Mr. Chair, because of the financial situation, we are not initiating any new capital projects this

year, but we do continue to provide capital support to post-secondary institutions. We will invest nearly 22 million this year in preventative maintenance and renewal. These investments will allow our institutions to support students by replacing equipment and making necessary repairs. And we're overseeing the federal strategic infrastructure fund, which will see over \$65 million in federal funding to expand, repair, and modernize our post-secondary institutions. With matching funds, the program will see \$138 million in capital investments at nine institutions. Again I urge you to consider our record, Mr. Chair. Over the past decade we've invested \$576 million in new buildings, equipment, and safety upgrades across the sector.

In terms of First Nations and Métis support, we must invest in buildings, but the most important investments we make are in our people. This year the Ministry of Advanced Education is investing more than \$17 million to support post-secondary education for First Nations and Métis students. Our investments include programs that are part of a pan-government response to support the community of La Loche following the tragic events there just over a year ago. We are also partnering with the Ministry of Education and First Nations University to offer a new Dene teacher education program, which will train up to 30 local students over four years to teach in local schools. And we are supporting efforts by the Ministry of Economy to offer new adult basic education programs plus a tri-trades program, which will train students in heavy equipment, truck and transport, and auto mechanics.

Our previous investments to support indigenous education are paying dividends. There are more than 16,000 First Nations and Métis people enrolled in post-secondary education. That's a 34 per cent increase since 2007-08, an inspiring number. During that time nearly 10,000 First Nations and Métis people have received a post-secondary degree, diploma, or certificate — an increase of 48 per cent.

Mr. Chair, we've also entered into a new partnership that we hope will transform university training in the North. Last month I announced Northlands College will take over university programming in La Ronge. They will be supported by a robust advisory group including Gabriel Dumont Institute and the universities of Saskatchewan and Regina. This change will provide stable leadership to continue and to expand university programming in La Ronge, Creighton, Buffalo Narrows, Ile-a-la-Crosse, and across northern Saskatchewan.

In terms of sustainability, Mr. Chair, my ministry has five priorities for the post-secondary education system. It must always be accessible. It must be responsive. It must be sustainable, accountable, and of high quality. These principles guide us in everything we do.

Mr. Chair, as we transform the way we deliver essential public services, we decided we will pay particularly particular attention each year to one of our five expectations. Given the nature of the province's finances, we chose this year to focus on sustainability. Everything we do, every change we make will have to answer one basic question: can we sustain this? Our students have entrusted us with an important obligation; we must provide them with an education that allows them to go out in to the world and to succeed. But it must be sustainable, or what will we have left to offer the next generation of students?

Mr. Chair, Saskatchewan is facing a challenge, and this year's budget is about meeting that challenge. We all have to help get the province back to balance. It's not easy when finances are tight, but that's when we rely on our values: putting students first, pitching in and working together. This budget makes significant investments in post-secondary institutions, provides strong supports to students, and helps Saskatchewan return to balanced budgets. I look forward to questions from the members of the committee. Thank you.

[19:15]

The Chair: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Central management and services, vote (AE01), any questions?

Mr. Meili: — I have some questions.

The Chair: — Stick your hand up. I recognize Mr. Meili.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the minister for the introductory remarks, to the other MLAs present, and Mr. Vermette for joining me this evening, and for everyone within the ministry. I'm looking forward to the discussion. It is my first time doing estimates, Mr. Chair, so if there are any concerns, please let me know.

An Hon. Member: — Speak up.

Mr. Meili: — Including if I speak too quietly, as my colleague has just informed me.

So we've had a pretty wide summary there of what's going on in Advanced Education, and I'd like to get to quite a few of those issues. But before we go too broadly, I'd like to focus in on one in particular, and that's the NORTEP [northern teacher education program] question. And I'd like to acknowledge that we have some folks from northern Saskatchewan, students and teachers involved with the NORTEP program, who are watching, and with other related programs who are watching this evening and are very interested to know exactly what's going on.

Earlier today I understand the minister described the process of transfer from NORTEP to Northlands as going smoothly. In an interview today, Mr. Greschner of Northlands described it as messy. It appears that there remain a lot of questions and a lot of things that are unclear about what's going on here, and hopefully today we can get some more clarity.

One of the things that strikes me as most unclear is the rationale for the decision in the first place. It has seemed to me that this has been a solution in search of a problem and has never been made clear to me why NORTEP-NORPAC [northern teacher education program-Northern Professional Access College], that series of programs which has been so successful for the last four decades training teachers in northern Saskatchewan, giving people who are from the North opportunities to learn, to obtain that education to be able to work in the education field, and resulted in higher than 90 per cent completion rate. So very good success rate in terms of people coming into the program, finishing the program, but also in terms of retention rates, with most people staying within the profession of education and most people staying within the area of the North. So it's been

cited as a pretty shining example of exactly the sort of program you would want in an area like northern Saskatchewan.

So my first question, and the question that perhaps baffles me most about all of this, is why would we have made this decision in the first place, just one year after signing a five-year agreement to continue with the NORTEP program?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Meili, for the question. And just as part of your preamble you touched on the press report that came out earlier today in which Mr. Greschner was quoted. And I will just say just a few things on that before we move into the more general nature of your remarks.

On his comments, I guess I would say first of all that Northlands has been enthusiastic, full of goodwill in this process — and as I referenced in my comments earlier, his radio ads going in La Ronge inviting students to enrol — trying to explain to the best of his ability and the institution's ability, how this will work. I think that any transition has some bumps. I don't think any transition like this or anything similar is completely without any curves in the road. I think, in terms of his perspective, NORTEP has put up some perhaps unnecessary obstructions when it comes to being able to openly get the message out to students about how this transition will work. And we hope that that will be smooth and we have every faith that it will be. And as I say, in these types of processes there are inevitably some kinks.

However, I can share with you that the universities met with Northlands. And this is part of the issue, that we don't want to get ahead of ourselves in this process because there are a lot of positive things that are happening. And in this case the universities met with Northlands and with GDI, Gabriel Dumont Institute, and apparently there were some very positive, positive discussions and potentially very positive outcomes that came out of that meeting that was held just today.

And so again, I think we mustn't get ahead of ourselves and make the process overly negative when really things are full steam ahead in terms of Northlands and their will to not only provide university programming and education programming, but expand it and expand other university programming.

And I guess to get to your more general question about why — and I have certainly commented on this previously, but I'm happy to again — I think part of the rationale was the fact that there would be one provider based in La Ronge, which is already so active in La Ronge, already so established, so successful, and that it is already offering university programming in Ile-a-la-Crosse, Buffalo Narrows, and Creighton, and has very exciting plans to expand that programming, already offers social work, business administration, nursing. And this is a natural fit with expanding that programming beyond perhaps an exclusively TEP-based [teacher education program] program to broader university programming, which I think is very positive. And as I say, the fact that they're already on the ground there and that, you know, there would be from two to perhaps one provider where funding wouldn't be split and where funding could then be provided to one that is already in the process of expanding university programming.

Mr. Meili: — So you mentioned that Northlands was successful and established, and I don't question that for a moment. But NORTEP of course was also successful and established, and there certainly hasn't appeared to be any demand from students or from community members to have that change made. In fact from my understanding of your meetings in the North, you had that relayed fairly clearly to you, and it was relayed later by people coming down from the North to protest this change, that there really wasn't a demand from students.

So I'm still struggling a little bit to understand what the impetus was. You've said, you know, you want to streamline, but why streamline? What's the purpose of that? What was driving this decision?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Well I believe I was relatively clear in my previous answer. I think that one danger to that preamble is — and you made a similar comment today in question period when you said that we choose not to listen to northern leaders and students — I think that risks being somewhat irresponsible in terms of lumping together all northern leaders and students as having one opinion. I know for a fact that not all students have that opinion. I know for a fact that not all northern leaders have that opinion. And I think it risks being, if not slightly condescending, somewhat irresponsible to lump them all in as having the identical opinion.

I think there are many students, for example, who attend Northlands right now who are certainly more than enthusiastic about their programming. There are some at NORPAC who, you know, for whom this has been a bit of an emotional time. I understand that; change is never easy. And I absolutely understand that there is going to be, as I said previously, that there are going to be perhaps some bumps in the road in terms of reaction. But overall this process is really about providing increased access for students in the North to university programming through one university provider.

And let's not forget who is working closely on an advisory committee, not only with Gabriel Dumont Institute, which is well established and highly respected, but with the two degree-granting institutions, namely the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] and the U of R [University of Regina].

I just think that it's a wonderful opportunity to not only use the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina's expertise in terms of Bachelor of Education and education programming, but the sky's the limit in terms of what Northlands can continue to negotiate with the universities in terms of expanded programming, and are in the process and have a proven track record in that regard in terms of expanding their programming already, which NORTEP didn't do. Which is as it is, but it didn't expand programming or branch into necessarily completely different areas. And I think it's an opportunity that shouldn't be missed.

Mr. Meili: — So I hear what you're saying about we can't assume that the voices we hear are all of the voices, but the voices that we've heard have been very clear that there was no demand. And I'd be very interested to know who has been demanding this. Who are the people that you are meeting with that were urging this, outside of perhaps people connected

directly with Northlands? Who has been actually asking for this, and what's the demand been?

And I guess I ask that because from what I've been able to ascertain, I'm not seeing anything publicly from any leaders, certainly not anything publicly from students, and really only seeing people pushing for this that have some connection to Northlands.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Well thank you for that comment. I guess just to go back a little bit, of course as you'll be aware, this process with NORTEP predated my time as a minister. And certainly I wanted to make sure when I was appointed that I took all the time that was necessary to weigh the decision, to analyze the programming and the possibilities at hand. And I will say that I even took more time than was necessary, which I hesitated to do, to go back and do all the due diligence I possibly could about the programming possibilities that this solution could offer.

And ultimately the decision that I entered into, that we entered into as a government, I truly do feel is in the best interests of students in the North and for future students in the North, that they can absolutely access what will be a high-quality program on a par with all other university programming, comparable university programming. And that they will be able to teach as a result, not only in the North, but anywhere in the province and across the country. And I think that should be the goal of real excellence in that regard for them.

Mr. Meili: — Okay. Well I recognize and acknowledge that this process did begin prior to you being named minister. However, there was a later process that did occur during your time as minister, and that's the process whereby the decision was made for NORTEP to be transferred to Northlands. And I'm just looking at a letter here dated from November 2nd, 2016 in which we have the minister's instructions to the NORTEP Council, to Ms. Larocque, and Ms. Malmsten of the NORTEP Council. Really, I'll summarize, and it's giving instructions to hold the process by which the institution that would take over NORTEP afterwards would be selected, and that it was accompanied by a summary of the way in which that would be interpreted.

[19:30]

So that's an interesting thing that I think we need to dig into a little bit more. We later had a letter from NORTEP/NORPAC to the minister that described the way in which they drafted evaluation criteria and requested an expression of interest from several facilities, several institutions — First Nations University, U of R, U of S, Gabriel Dumont Institute, or GDI; Northern Lights School Division; and Northlands College — and that there would be a written expression of interest followed by an interview process. And then this was communicated to the minister of December 15th of 2016.

My understanding, from what I've heard from NORTEP Council and from yourself in this Chamber, is that the process was not followed exactly the same for every one of these institutions, that the Northlands College — which was ultimately selected — did not follow this process that NORTEP Council had set out, did not submit the expression of interest

requested, and did not go through the interview process, but rather submitted a letter that was aside. So I guess I'm wondering why, why that happened? Why you had a process that the other institutions followed and the one that was ultimately successful chose not to follow? And why we shouldn't interpret that as this having been something of a foregone conclusion prior to the beginning of this process?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Meili. I just, I want to go back quickly to, and just say first of all, as part of the last question, to elaborate just with one more detail about the rationale. And I think one other quite important aspect to this is the lack of math and science teachers in the North at the high school level, and that is something that Northlands has undertaken to address and we hope to correct. And again I think that's something that should be looked at and should be developed over the coming years. And as I say, Northlands has undertaken to do that, so I think that's one thing that's important to mention.

I would say with some of your comments that you've just made now, you said at one point you're summarizing, not quoting, and I think quoting would be helpful.

Mr. Meili: — You can read the letter if you like.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Well which letter are we referring to? Which date?

Mr. Meili: — November 2nd, 2016.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — And what was said in the letter?

Mr. Meili: —

The council's efforts to identify key milestones and timelines, engage stakeholders, invite proposals from potential alternate providers, and develop evaluation criteria that will be used to inform its recommendation are invaluable to moving this important work forward.

It goes on to discuss the timing of the council submitting its evaluation report and then to describe a summary the way in which you would instruct the ministry to interpret and apply the council's evaluation.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Okay, I will just say on the process . . . And it really is very straightforward, so no real needless, I think, confusion on that score. And I might get officials to add anything if I miss anything on this. But really the submission process — because that's what it was — was such that Northlands did provide a submission in letter form, and I'll get to that in a minute. It also met with NORTEP, and NORTEP has acknowledged that it met with Northlands, and it hasn't not acknowledged it received its letter.

And you know the submissions, there was a range of styles. Some were longer than others, and Northlands' was brief, the original letter. And the basic tenor of the letter from Northlands . . . And this I will paraphrase unless our officials have it handy, in which case we're happy to read it. The letter basically, the tenor of the letter was that Northlands as an institution wanted to defer to the degree-granting institutions in the spirit of

collaboration. And because Northlands is a broker of university programs, it was simply acknowledging that it would be the broker for degree-granting institutions and therefore would be happy to work with whichever one of those might be selected, in whatever form and whatever partnership.

And that is basically the long and short of it. And you know, following that, as I say, I went back in some cases. I read the five submissions — I think it was five — in great detail and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . six. And we discussed obviously as a ministry, and then I went back and asked further questions of, I believe, two or three. Very, very technical questions about the proposals, and then they returned and we conferred again, and such was the process.

And again, you know, we truly did as a government make the decision finally in the best interests of northern students. And as I say, NORTEP is on the record as acknowledging that that was the way the process was going to work. So there's no real mystery around it. They've acknowledged it. NORTEP said, I believe it was on — I don't know the exact date — I believe it was November 24th, that they acknowledged and hoped, they acknowledged that the final decision rested with the ministry, hoped that the ministry and that I would, and the government would follow their recommendation, but acknowledged that that wasn't necessarily predetermined. And that really is how, that is how that process worked. I'll just . . .

Mr. Meili: — So just in terms of the aside around math and science, I'm not totally sure that I understand what you were getting at there. I don't believe that Northlands at this time is providing math and science teacher education. And it's hard to know why that would be a criteria, that if it was really a needed thing, that NORTEP who are already teaching teachers wouldn't be able to expand to offer those services, why that would be a justification for moving, for closing down NORTEP, something that was working so successfully. And still I don't think we've seen a clear rationale.

In terms of the process, I guess it is concerning that there did appear, and the people involved with the NORTEP Council did not see the Northlands submission as the same as the other submissions, and that they chose GDI. And that they made that very clear recommendation that they saw an organization that was ready to do the work already, had existing programs that were applicable in terms of teaching education.

And you know, it's a little bit concerning that the first recommendation from the community was don't stop this program; don't transfer this program, keep it. The second recommendation was give it to GDI. And neither of those recommendations were followed. So when I say not listening to it, it does appear that there's not really an appetite to, in a meaningful way, follow the direction of local communities.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Just to clarify on the math and science that you referenced. I certainly didn't mean to leave the impression that Northlands is involved in any sort of math and science teaching currently. The scores have been relatively low in that regard in terms of math and science for teachers coming out of training in the North. And the one thing that Northlands has undertaken going forward is to try to correct the lack of math and science teachers at the high school level and train them for

high school placements in the North and anywhere else. So that's really the only thing that I was getting at was that Northlands is focused on that, among other things, but hasn't obviously been in that, you know, doing that work until now of course.

I'll just say one more time as well that let's not forget that NORTEP acknowledged that they had received a submission from Northlands. So again there's no mystery surrounding any of that. And part of the rationale was also that Northlands already had a presence in La Ronge, whereas Gabriel Dumont does not. So that's another piece to the rationale.

And I guess I will say to this point about listening, and that somehow listening means not following the recommendation of NORTEP. I think that procedurally that is somewhat tricky, partly because NORTEP acknowledged the process was what it was.

And I certainly listened. I listened to stakeholders when I was up in La Ronge, to community members. Mr. Vermette was among the audience that day. We stayed for the entire day, and I felt my job that day certainly was to listen to community members and students talk about northern education generally and NORTEP in some cases specifically. Northlands was also in the audience and many others and had been up to La Ronge previous to that as well to meet directly with students and the board.

I certainly feel comfortable that I not only listened, but read everything very, very diligently and presented to my cabinet colleagues what I felt, and what they eventually felt, was the best possibility for northern students and university programming for the future in this province. And I feel comfortable with that.

The Chair: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, Minister, your officials. Just a clarification, seeing you brought me into the conversation that I was at a stakeholders' meeting and listened to many alumni, students, faculty, many First Nations, Métis leaders. There was many leaders in that room.

And yes, you did hear. And you said you listened. And maybe you listened, but man, you made up your own decision at the end of the day. Because even myself, sitting in there for the hours we sat there listening to testimonies and listening to the success and the role models and the stories that people expressed, hoping you would reconsider and not do what you guys were going to do. And you saying it's in the best interests of the students, the best interests of northern people, of Aboriginal people.

Listening to the stories that I have to listen to day after day from students who are very upset, confused. All they want is an opportunity at education and go back to their communities. They are role models. That's what they want.

I was proud to sit on NORTEP for eight years on the board of governors. That was a program where First Nations chiefs, Métis leaders, elected officials were elected on that board and took pride and ownership of a program that did wonderful

things.

What you guys have done is angered so many people . . . frustrated . . . It's upsetting. Aboriginal people had an opportunity, northern students had an opportunity to move forward in a very positive way.

You look at the numbers and success of that program — 40 years. You heard the stories. You heard the leadership say, whether it was PAGC [Prince Albert Grand Council], FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations], all of them saying the same thing: leave it as is; it's a role model. It's a very proud program and you still chose to make a decision that you did.

And you have the right to do that, even though the people ask you not to, those that are going to suffer the most. So it's unfortunate that you make it sound like . . . Yes, you did say how . . . [inaudible]. You said you listened.

[19:45]

I don't know. Anyway, you brought me into it. I just . . . Not to be disrespectful, but many people back north were hoping you would reconsider and support NORTEP in another way.

If there was areas that they could improve, why not work with the board of governors? Why not work to improve that program instead of doing what you've done? You've dismantled it. You don't even realize.

I think you need to go and talk to the people that you're talking, that you're saying it's such a great process that you're working through. I don't know where you're getting that information. Interesting.

But we'll see where we go at the end of the day here. Maybe you can find some money in this budget and reverse your decision. There's still that opportunity, and that's what many are hoping.

So with that, thank you for giving me an opportunity, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for your comments, Mr. Vermette. And I certainly acknowledge that there is emotion behind what you are saying and that there is emotion around this issue. And I guess all I would say is that I entered into this process with a very open mind and no preconceived notions, and I stand by that. I truly feel that, you know, for the students who are less sure about this — and I'm sure there are some from NORTEP — there are also students who are very proud students at Northlands.

And I think it's unfortunate . . . I understand, you know, some of the context behind what you're saying of course, but it would be my hope, it would be our hope that the divisiveness and the divisiveness between some elements of the two institutions could be smoothed out so that we really can, we really can come together and do this together for northern students.

I believe that this is moving in the right direction for the North and for students in the North, because far from having the

programming cut, it's actually moving to a model that is expanding university programming. And I do believe that with time, as emotions smooth out, it will resolve itself positively.

And I think that in the meantime there are a lot of enthusiastic students and fellow students at Northlands who are really in the process of wanting to welcome NORTEP students. And that is a genuine, a genuine sense in the community, that there is — for some of the emotion that you're getting at — also enthusiasm, and forward-looking, and the excitement about expanding programming.

The Chair: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister, I want to be very clear. We are very proud of Northlands College and the great programs that Northlands . . . [inaudible] . . . So it's not about Northlands and NORTEP.

I want to be very clear so if the minister is thinking that I was implying in any way that NORTEP hasn't done a great job . . . And those students that take the program like my family — my son — have taken that course and done well, have got an opportunity to jobs in the North, working in the North, taking care of his family. We're very proud of that program.

I don't know, but I think there is somebody who's creating that divisions, as you so clearly pointed out there is. You're right; yes, somebody's created that. And I think I have a good idea who did it. But at the end of the day, I'll say this much. You're talking about, and I'm hoping that you will follow up then as a minister, you're saying you want this transition, this partnership, to work together in a meaningful way for the students and you want to focus that.

I hope you're genuine and sincere. I really do. Because at the end of the day I'm hoping if that process is going to happen, your ministry, yourself, whoever will commit to saying okay, if we're going to go this route . . . Because you're not listening to what the leadership said. And as I've said, I feel you didn't listen. You may have . . . You listened but you're not acting on what was shared at the stakeholders meeting.

So having said that, I'm hoping that you will work and you will make sure that those that are coming to the table to work together for the betterment of the students of NORTEP, that you will ensure that those partners and I think, and an advisory you talked about, and that whole process. You came up with the process. My understanding, you had ministry staff on there — maybe I'm wrong, you can clarify that if I'm wrong; it's my understanding — and went through a process that selected whoever the best candidate would be or organization to do that.

But even though that recommendation came — and I think it was unanimous — that an institute like GDI would take it on, and for some reason Northlands College, which is fine. You say your reasons why they got it, math and sciences is what you were talking about, so that's your argument to us, that you're saying that's why you did this. So if that's the way it is, I'm hoping that you'll make sure that your officials, yourself, will make sure that transition happens, that they're all working together for the students so that they can be proud to go back home and be role models. I hope you're genuine and sincere. I

have no reason to believe that you're not. I'm hoping that that transition will happen, that you will make sure that they come to the table, all those partners, to do the right thing, using your staff to do that. So I'm hoping because I know students want it in the North and they want that program to be there.

I don't have much more to say but I'm hoping that you will follow through on that and make this transition if it has to be, if whoever wanted it has to be that they will foresee and make sure the best they can that that happens. Anyway, thank you, Minister, and your officials.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Vermette. And I will just reiterate, I mean, not to leave the impression that the math and science side of things alone was the rationale for this decision. That was just one part of it and I'm sure you understand that. As I have said, Northlands was already on the ground in La Ronge, already providing university programming, already wanting to expand university programming, has the northern expertise, has the all-northern board which is very respected and very stable, and has the partnership behind it of Gabriel Dumont Institute and the two universities in this province which I think is just a real winning mix for northern students. And certainly the decision was made because I felt, we felt, and that remains absolutely the case, that this was in the best interests of students. And that doesn't change.

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. Meili.

Mr. Meili: — Well thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Vermette, for representing so well the way you do, your community and the students and others affected by this decision.

I think we can perhaps move on a bit from some of these pieces. I think it's fair to say that this has been described by Mr. Greschner as messy, and it is messy. It's messy in the initial rationale that remains unclear and it's messy in the process. We had the Northlands submission being given a score of zero by the NORTEP Council, not even being considered, and GDI being put forward as the preferred institution. So that again, whether you feel strongly that was the right decision or not, it would be hard to say that it wasn't messy in terms of its degree of clarity and in terms of its degree of faithfulness to what the process appeared to be at the beginning.

Moving forward, however, we're now in a new mess. We're in today's mess; those are yesterday's messes. And today's mess has multiple elements. One has to do with the instructions that the minister gave to Northlands, as I understand them, as were in the press release from the minister which were to . . . And there's two key elements to this. One is to deliver NORTEP programming, so to deliver the programming that NORTEP had agreed to deliver. And two, to deliver that programming in partnership with GDI, that you had urged in your letter for the institution to partner with GDI. And from everything that I'm able to see thus far, we don't have a NORTEP program. We have an offering of a new Bachelor of Education program, which is different. It's not the same, and it's not clear whether or not it contains the same elements that were there before. And there are some specific elements thereof that I'd like to get into in subsequent questions.

And then the other thing is around the indication. So you indicated that they should provide NORTEP programming. That doesn't appear to be what's going on. And you indicated that they should partner with GDI. And I've been able to see letters from GDI offering to partner, and a response from Northlands refusing to partner with Gabriel Dumont Institute, which seems to be not in keeping with the spirit of your instructions or really in the spirit of partnership, to provide the best for the students who are questioning what's going to happen next.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Meili. There are a few parts, obviously, to that question. Let me deal first, I guess, with GDI. There was never any specific . . . I think you said in your preamble there that there was an explicit statement that they were partnering with GDI and Northlands, and GDI is on the advisory committee. My statements and intentions when I made this announcement were that we hoped GDI would play a role, that we were pleased, more than pleased that they were on the advisory committee. Certainly GDI is a respected institution and, you know, along with Northlands and the universities, on the advisory committee for a reason. And certainly they're well equipped to play a role, if that's how things develop, with all their experience and so on. And keep in mind that today they held a meeting with Northlands and the universities, so that's a very positive first step.

And I think there's a little bit of a risk here in getting ahead of ourselves and, as I say, over-negativizing a process that is just finding its legs. And I think we all want that process to work, and we want to give that process a little time to work. If GDI and Northlands this very day met with the universities, I think we can all acknowledge that's positive. They were obviously there in a spirit of partnership, and we know that some positive things — and certainly the tenor was positive — appear to have come out of that meeting.

I would say that I think that in any process such as this, as you'll acknowledge, you know, there is some he-said-she-said, she-said-they-said, and I think it would be irresponsible of me and of you or of anyone really to wade in to every one of those comments from this group and that group and so on. I would rather let and we would rather let the process get its legs, and I wouldn't want to preclude anything in that regard.

[20:00]

I have put faith and trust in the advisory committee that GDI is a part of, and I have put faith and trust in Northlands. And I think that, while they may express some frustration today with perhaps not having . . . you know, having had some difficulties at times with NORTEP Council, we will work through this. They will work through this. And surely the main goal here, the interest here is students. And I'm sure that's the case for all of those players including certainly, NORTEP, whom we thank for all their work and their ongoing assistance.

So I just have faith in the process and I don't want to tear it down. I think there's a great danger in doing that. And for example, I hear that assets have been given to GDI and then someone else will say they haven't been and so on. I think it's just simply wise counsel to let these partners find their legs together and not to hurt that process in any way.

And I will just address some of your comments today because you've touched on some of them again in your question. You quoted me earlier today. You said, "students will be able to finish the programs under the same terms and conditions they had when they entered." And again, I will say on the record, Mr. Meili, that that is a misconstruing of my quote. It is a misconstruing based on cobbling together two parts of the press release, and the press release that went out said this:

The ministry will work with Northlands College to ensure all currently enrolled NORTEP Council students experience minimal changes, with the intention that students be able to finish their programs under the same terms and conditions they had when they entered.

And I think it's important here to keep in mind Northlands quote on this, and it's very direct. Northlands quote is that "returning students would automatically be accepted" contrary to what you said earlier today in question period. And so again that's very important to clear up because, you know, no one wants to criticize, I think, Northlands, including I'm sure, you, or to misconstrue what it has said or to cobble together two quotes in terms of what I've said. So I wanted to clarify those two points.

You also said today, and I'm quoting here, ". . . with no mention of any financial assistance. Current NORTEP students are being told they need to reapply, and . . . don't even have a guarantee that they'll be readmitted into the new program." And again I would quote Northlands and the quote that came out that returning students would automatically be accepted. So I think that is important to remember and sows needless confusion for potential Northlands students and NORTEP students who might want to enrol in Northlands and suddenly, based on those comments, be utterly confused as to what to do. So I think it's important there to keep that in mind.

I would also point to your statement today. You said, "Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago this minister quoted a press release from Northlands that said that those programs would stay intact and that those students would have the same access." And again that's not quite what I said. I was quoting from the press release of Northlands which I have previously read into the record. And just bear with me for one minute and I'll read that out.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I am sorry for the delay on that. But I'll just quote the exact statement from Northlands, that press release. And I quote:

Students currently enrolled in the NORTEP/NORPAC program will see virtually no change; classes will be offered in the same classrooms . . . housing will continue to be provided to those who need it, and we will work diligently to keep all other student supports in place as well. For future students, the changes that will be introduced will only serve to enhance and expand the program to offer more choices for students, not only in the variety of classes they take, but . . . how they choose to take . . . [them] and in what community . . .

So I think that's important to read in. And I'll just quote one final thing from earlier. You said, and I quote, "She promised [that would be me] that this change would somehow make

education better.” And that was, I guess, negatively meant or construed, meant to be negatively construed. And again I would go back to how that is absolutely the case and that is absolutely what we had in mind — to make education better for students in the North.

But you went on to say that funding, I said, would go directly to northern students, “Funding would go directly to northern students.” And I certainly panned my brain and the record for any mention I have ever made of that. And I guess perhaps you can clarify on that. I don’t know if you mean direct payments into accounts or cheques or what you’re getting at there, but I don’t, I just simply don’t understand that quote.

And you went on, “It’s no exaggeration to say that the minister’s shutdown of this program has put the entire northern education system at risk.” I would simply go back to this idea that we do . . . We must try to not drive a wedge between the two institutions, and I think statements like that does. I think it’s frankly, well unfortunate in the extreme in terms of Northlands and how they would think they were presented by those remarks, and certainly the last intention we had, and I’m absolutely convinced will be the polar opposite of putting the entire northern education system at risk.

Mr. Meili: — So a couple of things to clarify. In one of the previous press releases, it was stated that . . . From the minister’s office, it was stated that GDI was to be playing a integral and crucial role in delivery of teacher training in La Ronge. So that strikes me as much more than presence on an advisory board, but an actual active partnership.

I guess just to step back, I’m told that we’re getting ahead of ourselves, and I think that may be happening but probably not in the way that you meant. Because we now have some communication from Northlands to NORTEP which was making it very clear that the employees of NORTEP were not to be coming over to Northlands and even that there was . . . And I’d be interested to see that press release that said they would automatically be accepted because, while that might have been the promise, that doesn’t seem to be what’s going on. And instead we have a letter telling NORTEP, “Please advise your students that if you choose to further your studies, you need to apply to Northlands College as soon as possible.” So that is the opposite of automatically. There’s a process there that’s required and no guarantee given that that application would be accepted.

So I think, if you believe that we’re getting ahead of ourselves, please understand that that’s not in an attempt to undermine Northlands College in any way. It’s because that is very concerning for students. It’s very concerning for the people who are losing their employment. It’s very concerning for those who would like to start or continue with teacher education.

It’s also really important to note that listing the tuition as \$6,000 a year, \$900 for books, without listing any of the student supports, is getting ahead of oneself. If we’re thinking that we should be able to trust that there will be, as you quoted the press release and quoted in *Hansard*, “. . . virtually no change; classes . . . offered in the same classrooms.” Also there’s some question about that, whether that will be the case or whether much of this will now be delivered by distance.

But virtually no change. I don’t see how there’s any way that we could describe going from tuition that’s fully covered, books that are fully covered, to tuition now of 6,000 plus 900 a year for books, and call that virtually no change. And to put that out there without giving indication that those supports would be available, without even being able to give indication given . . . And this is the result of the wedge that has been driven between these institutions, and I assure you not by the opposition. As a result of that, there’s no assurance that there’s housing available either, despite that being in the press release. So there’s a lot going on here that is exactly getting ahead of itself.

And what we need from you, Minister, is an assurance for students that what was initially promised — NORTEP intact and living in Northlands, with the same offering being available, the same supports, the same housing virtually unchanged — that’s what students need to hear. And we are very concerned about what’s happening with the positions of those who are employed with NORTEP and the positions available for those students to further their studies.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just am going to ask Mr. Meili if he could clarify his mention of that letter. We’re not completely clear what letter he’s referring to right at the beginning.

Mr. Meili: — I’m sorry. Are you talking about the press release or the letter between Northlands and NORTEP?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — We thought you said it was to us.

Mr. Meili: — Oh. No, sorry, there’s a letter from . . . Just to clarify, there was the press release from you talking about GDI. That was a quote. And then I was quoting a letter that was from Northlands to NORTEP. There were two letters in fact that we can make available that show that there was a rejection of the staff and no clear acceptance of the students, just an indication that the students must apply rather than being . . . certainly no indication that they would be automatically accepted.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Sorry, Mr. Meili. What are the dates of the two letters, Northlands to NORTEP? They both flow from Northlands to NORTEP?

Mr. Meili: — They do, and the dates are April 6th for the letter regarding students, and April 4th for the letter regarding the staff.

[20:15]

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. So just to take this in parts, I will say we don’t have a copy of the letter. We don’t believe we have a copy of the letter from Northlands to NORTEP, April 6 dealing with students, April 4 dealing with staff. Certainly we’re acquainted with the press release involving GDI, and I’ve spoken to that; you know, the promise of that partnership and, as I say, that was borne out today that GDI and Northlands have met with the universities.

I will say I think it’s fair to say that Northlands, just to Mr. Meili’s point about these letters, I believe is in the process of clarifying positions on supports. So we will perhaps leave that to Northlands in the coming days. And there have been

undertakings from GDI, some to-ing and fro-ing about this idea of the assets. And as we know, NORTEP has assets which it owns and is legally responsible for the maintenance and repair of, and we believe preliminarily has made some undertaking to provide these assets to GDI. However GDI has not formally signed off on that in terms of its board, is our understanding. That said, GDI has also made undertakings to co-operate in terms of the assets, to co-operate in terms of the library resource assets of NORTEP's. And again we find that very hopeful and very collaborative on their part, on Northlands's part, and something that bodes very well, we believe.

As for staffing and so on, I find I'm hesitant to weigh in on what our collective bargaining issues, labour issues, confidentiality-involved issues involving staff. I think again, it's too early in the process to weigh in that way. And I think further, you know, clarification and developments will be forthcoming in coming days.

Mr. Meili: — So just to clarify a couple things, it is worth noting that in that letter — which I believe actually was, now that I review it further, was cc'd to Ms. Bloor Cavers — Northlands stated that because the assets had been transferred to GDI, not to Northlands, then there was no reason for the staff to come to Northlands or for the students to. And I don't want to put words into anyone's mouth, but it wasn't clear that the students would follow either. So that strikes me as a bit concerning and certainly something that I hope the minister will pursue, as this is certainly not a reason for . . . You know, those assets are a different question, and it's not a reason to interrupt these partnerships.

I think it's probably best, given that we don't have all night, as important and interesting as this particular discussion is, I think it behooves us now to move on to some other parts of the budget in regard to Advanced Education. So overall we're looking at a fairly significant cut to Advanced Education. We are seeing a cut of \$44 million this year. That's twice the cut from last year, but there was a cut of \$22 million last year. And the year before, \$36 million, so about three-quarters as much.

That amounts to a cut of over 12 per cent in the last three years. That's a pretty substantial, steady downward trend in terms of support from this government for Advanced Education.

I guess what concerns me about that — especially in a time of economic downturn where innovation is so important, where the return on investment that universities give in the short- and long-term is so essential to economic recovery — one cannot help wonder why the minister and her predecessors in this ministry have chosen to steadily decrease the support for Advanced Education, and how that fits in to a vision of a successful future for this province.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry, Mr. Meili. Just to go back a little bit to your previous question on those letters, and then I will be happy to answer your question. On the April 4th letter — the April 6th letter, if we find I'll comment on that one — but the April 4 letter I do now recall here and see in fact actually this was, yes, given to one of my officials. And so I'm just reading this now.

The main point I think is fair, that's fair to say in this letter

involves this issue that I touched on earlier about the NORTEP program apartments, library, and other assets to GDI. And Northlands, in this letter, seems to be saying that because of the recent motion passed by the NORTEP board in which they advised that they would be transferring the NORTEP program apartments, library, and other assets to GDI, somehow this would have an impact on staffing and staff obligations. And I think it's fair to say that that will be further clarified in the coming days and weeks.

I think that it's a bit of a work in progress in terms of this connection between the assets, the library assets, the programming and the funding of the programming, and the change in that regard. And I think that that's something that Northlands may also clarify slightly. Perhaps there was some slight confusion about what that motion of NORTEP actually signified in terms of staffing and in terms of Northlands' perception of that. So I think that that will be and should be probably further clarified in the coming days and weeks.

Mr. Meili: — May I just quickly before we go on to the . . . Just to clarify before we go on to that larger question, would that be acceptable to you that the staff of NORTEP be informed that they would not be employed with Northlands? Would it be acceptable to you that the students would not automatically be accepted but would be forced to apply and be part of another pool, given that the program has changed? And certainly, would it be acceptable to you if the impetus for that decision, to not hire that staff and not accept those students without question, would be based on the transfer of assets?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you for that. I will just say, as I said in a previous answer, I think it would be premature certainly of me or of us to weigh in. Certainly when it comes to expressing opinions about future staffing and staffing decisions, I think it's premature. Again, it's very early days. The transition is really just starting and under way, and I think that as things clarify, some of those issues will also be made more clear. Again, it would be, I think, premature of me certainly to weigh in with any kind of opinion at this time on that.

Mr. Meili: — So certainly no commitment then that the NORTEP staff can expect employment or that these students can expect to be accepted into Northlands?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Well again I would say, Mr. Meili, that as we've seen in the number of other issues involving this one that we've discussed over the last hour or so, there are some issues that are working themselves out naturally. And I think it's important that we let that process get its legs a little bit and that we let these partners have discussions, real discussions about how this will work, and it would be premature of me at this time to weigh in certainly with any opinion in that regard.

As to your other question, the broader question involving the budget, of course as has been said and certainly it bears repeating that this budget poses challenges, although as the member for Saskatoon Nutana now rather famously acknowledged last spring, it's inevitable that there are going to be shortfalls when commodity prices are what they are. And the members opposite will recall that in 1994-95, the NDP [New Democratic Party] government cut university funding by 4 per cent during challenging times. That said, I would say that our

post-secondary institutions seem to recognize the challenges, and the U of S in its own operations forecast for 2017-18 stated, and I quote:

Over . . . [our] 110-year history there have been times when governments have been faced with financial challenges that have required them to be extremely prudent in all expenditures . . . We recognize the financial challenges facing the government and we are able to withstand the declines in funding that we have experienced on a short-term basis.

And of course that funding, let's not forget, has been 8.3 billion over 10 years, a 52 per cent increase overall since '07-08. And as the Minister of Finance said, I believe it was last week, if our balanced budget plans hold true we will see funding back to those institutions at a level that we've seen in the past. And certainly we value our universities' enormous contributions to our province and, you know, as we do all our post-secondary institutions, and certainly appreciate their grace under pressure in this regard.

Mr. Meili: — Okay. So as we look forward, we've got 36 million, 22 million, 44 million. What's coming next year? And how do you expect universities to plan forward? How do you expect students to plan when the resultant increases in tuition or cuts in programs emerge? What do you . . . What can we count on going forward? Have we reached the bottom, because this is pretty deep. Or are you going to keep going?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Well I think you're asking, Mr. Meili, to look into a crystal ball, and of course that's very difficult, I think. And I'll reference once again the Minister of Finance who said that if our balanced budget plans hold true, we hope to see funding back to those institutions at a level we've seen in the past. But that also of course includes resource revenue and managing things in such a way that we aren't as dependent on it as perhaps we all have been in the past.

So impossible to look in to the future, except to say that the plan, as you know, is balance over three years, which I think is wise stewardship. And again I would just go back to this year briefly and just say that in terms of our post-secondary institutions, they seem to recognize the fiscal realities, and of course things aren't easy, as we know.

But I'll quote Lee Ahenakew, the board of governors Chair at the U of S. He wrote in a letter earlier this year: "I want to express deep appreciation for the current fiscal realities. We understand we have a key role in containing costs."

Mike Fritzier of Luther College wrote, "Ultimately we will have to balance our budget as we have every year. Please know we will continue to be careful stewards of the public funds we receive."

[20:30]

And Southeast College, as you know, one of our regional colleges, just this last week or so, Dion McGrath, president and CEO [chief executive officer] of Southeast College said he's:

. . . optimistic that the college is ready to face the

challenges of reduced funding in the coming year. "We were anticipating a tougher provincial budget, so we took it upon ourselves to prepare for this, through the . . . reduction exercise we went through this year."

He has a specific plan of action, is implementing efficiencies, cost-saving measures which ended up reducing the colleges' operating expenditures by 14 per cent.

And certainly there are other post-secondary institutions, players, people whom I could point to and quote with great amount of appreciation in terms of their co-operation but also, I guess, rising to the challenge that this faces and trying to also look inward at their own operations and see what they can do to move forward with the fiscal stewardship that we are trying to do.

Mr. Meili: — So I think we're certainly not talking about getting you a crystal ball. I don't think you need to be clairvoyant; simply you need to plan ahead. And we've seen requests from the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union asking for funding and tuition costs both to be pegged to the consumer price index so that there was some ability to forecast over a four-year degree for a student coming in today, who is able to plan so that they don't need a crystal ball in order to know whether they'll be able to afford to finish their education. They'll know whether or not they can come out of college, come out of university, without a huge debt.

You mentioned Mr. Ahenakew, the board Chair of the board of governors at the University of Saskatchewan, and a letter from him. I also had a chance to see a couple of letters to him. And one that I thought was very interesting was — and I apologize, I don't have the letter in front of me at this moment — but I have the faculty association's response stating that this letter suggested the board of governors achieve the goal of constraining the total cost of employee compensation so that it's no greater than it was in 2016-2017, and that to do so they would freeze in-range increments, general wage increases, performance bonus pay, etc.

And it just struck me as an odd choice, Minister, to write a letter to an autonomous institution — and you've described it in your own comments in this House as an autonomous institution, and respecting that autonomy — to step in to the point where you would say, guess what, we don't want you to do any increase in compensation and we're going to tell you how to avoid that increase in compensation. Is that appropriate, Minister, under *The University of Saskatchewan Act* and was that well received by the faculty and the board of governors?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Meili, and as you referenced the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union, I will just say before we move on to the letter and the 3.5 per cent that you reference, just in terms of, as I say, the USSU [University of Saskatchewan Students' Union] again, and this was prior to recent elections but it's interesting and important, I think, to note that they do seem to understand the equation of the fiscal reality. And as I say, they wrote that they are ". . . well aware that the costs of running a university are enormous and that much of the funding comes from taxpayer dollars." They stated ". . . it is of critical importance that a reasonable balance between [government funding and tuition] . . . is

achieved.” And certainly we agree with that.

Now also at the U of S of course, overall undergraduate student fees will increase by 1.8 per cent. That’s the current rate. Graduate student fees by 3.4 per cent, which is not a significant, significant increase. And if you just bear with me for one moment, I’m going to find one other document.

Thanks, Mr. Chair. Just to the letter that, Mr. Meili, that you referenced, I have written, we’ve written the board Chairs of our universities and regional colleges and requested that they keep these expenses from increasing. But of course the board of governors of the universities have the authority to make and to approve budgets, including approving union management contracts. And really the tenor of the letter was intended as one between partners and not meant as imposing, simply as encouraging.

Mr. Meili: — It certainly doesn’t appear to have been taken that way by the faculty association, and they described it as an overreach of the powers of the province into an autonomous institution.

You said something interesting, however, in the answer to the previous question. You threw out a number which was different than what was in the letter. In the letter, you said, keep it as it is. No increases over 2016-2017. But you just mentioned that lovely 3.5 per cent number we’ve been hearing so much about. Do you expect the public employees working in advanced education to take a 3.5 per cent reduction?

While the minister is preparing her answer to that question, is that 3.5 per cent accounted for in this budget year? Is that when we’re looking at that 44 million cut? Does that include that 3.5 per cent?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will just read the Premier’s comments recently on this topic and just clarify where I can. And he said that there aren’t going to be any:

... contracts ripped up with any public sector unions, with any unions [is his quote] representing public service providers in the province of Saskatchewan. We’ve been very clear about that [he went on], however we need to find another 3.5 per cent reduction in the overall costs of compensation for the public sector. We’ve asked that, from our side of ... [things], from the government management side ... that all options remain open. We need to respect the collective bargaining process and see what is agreed to by both the unions and management.”

Those are the Premier’s comments on that. And of course overall ... and I’ll just I guess reiterate on that a little. I mean, just reducing total compensation costs of course is one of the requirements needed to address the province’s fiscal challenge as outlined in the budget, and wages, as we know, are just one of the components that make up total compensation. Other examples include benefits, pensions, flexible benefits, and other things. And there is an expectation that a 3.5 per cent total-compensation-reduction target be achieved across the entire public sector.

Employers and unions have been asked to work together to find

solutions to achieve total-compensation-cost savings. Compensation for out-of-scope employees will also be impacted. The collective bargaining process will of course though determine how this goal is achieved and next steps are the responsibility of the various employers. And as a ministry, we are not directly involved in the process. The Public Service Commission is the employer’s representative for executive government and is leading the process. And just leave it at that.

The Chair: — We’ve been sitting here for an hour and 45 minutes, so we will take a five-minute recess, and the time will be added on at the end of the meeting. Thank you.

[20:45]

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — Okay, thank you. We may proceed. Mr. Meili.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you. And thank you, Minister, for that response. It occurs to me that respecting collective bargaining and demanding an immediate 3.5 per cent reduction in wages might be mutually exclusive.

But further to the question that I had asked previously which was not answered, is that 3.5 per cent coming out of Advanced Education? Are we expecting workers in that field to have a reduction in 3.5 per cent? And if so, which workers? Everyone? Professors to the cleaning staff? Or are there certain sectors that are getting that 3.5 per cent? And as I asked previously, when we look at this 5 per cent cut, is some of what makes up that \$44 million decrease in spending in Advanced Education, is some of that 3.5 per cent reduction in wages?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to the first question, of course the 3.5 reduction is subject to negotiations between the PSC [Public Service Commission] and unions. And the answer to your second question, Mr. Meili, is no.

Mr. Meili: — I just want to be 100 per cent sure that I’ve got that on the record. You’re saying that, no, that 3.5 per cent reduction is not part of the 5 per cent. So that’s going to require an additional question. Are we then expecting ... Are you then telling me that there’s 5 per cent off of universities plus you’re going after another 3.5 per cent off of the wages? Or is this sector actually going to be spared that 3.5 per cent? And, if spared, why this sector?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Just on that then, to follow up. Saskatchewan Polytechnic and regional colleges have been asked to participate in the reduction to total compensation cost, and the collective bargaining process will determine how this goal will be achieved. And the next steps are the responsibility of the various employers, and as a ministry we are not directly involved in this process. And leave it at that.

Mr. Meili: — Okay. I apologize for coming back, but that still requires some further clarity. So I’m to take it then that Sask Polytechnic and other colleges are having a 5 per cent cut, and on top of that being told to reduce wages by 3.5 per cent. Is that correct, Minister?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again I’ll just

reiterate, this is not imposing. They will negotiate this with their unions. And just in terms of Sask Poly and the regional colleges, they will be asked to negotiate a 3.5 reduction in total compensation.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you. You still haven't, and I'm sorry to do this, but you still haven't answered. That is on top of the 5 per cent. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — It is correct.

Mr. Meili: — Okay. So there's a 5 per cent cut plus a decrease of 3.5 per cent in the compensation they are able to provide their employees, which is, in an institution that the majority of their costs would be employee costs, that's going to be pretty significant. What if they say no? What if they're not able to? What if they say, we can't do this? You've said it's up to them, their discretion in how they go about it. What if they say we're actually not able to do this for you?

Mr. Boehm: — David Boehm, acting assistant deputy minister. So in terms of the expectation for Saskatchewan Polytechnic and regional colleges, they are simply asked, management is asked to do the best to negotiate with their unions to achieve the minus 3.5 per cent reduction in total compensation. And we're asking them to, you know, work together effectively and do the best they can to achieve that level. And beyond that, we'll take a wait-and-see approach as we will in government as well.

Mr. Meili: — Okay, so it's a request overall, but it's not necessarily an order. That, I think that many people would be really interested to hear that in many sectors, that there isn't necessarily an enforcement of this request coming up.

Might I ask, perhaps you would know, sir, what percentage of the expenditures of Sask Polytechnic and other schools are in wages, in compensation. And if you have it handy it'd be interesting to know for the universities as well.

[21:00]

Mr. Boehm: — So as mentioned, Sask Poly and regional colleges have been asked to participate in this process. And in terms of what the 3.5 per cent would represent of total compensation, that would be approximately \$6.5 million.

Mr. Meili: — Okay. You might have just misunderstood my question. What percentage of their expenditures are wages? You know, do they spend 60 per cent of the money they get on wages?

Mr. Boehm: — Our estimate would be in the range of 65 to 70 per cent, but if you need a precise percentage we would need to get back to you.

Mr. Meili: — And then would you see similar numbers for the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina?

Mr. Boehm: — We don't have the information for the universities at this point in time.

Mr. Meili: — So just to note that if we're looking at 3.5 per cent of 65 per cent approximately, that's an additional 2.3 per

cent cut to the technical schools and colleges, amounting to approximately a 7.5 per cent cut should they go through with this. I believe that . . . That's my understanding, that that money would not come out of the 5 per cent but would be on top of. Is that correct? Is that a correct understanding and estimation?

Mr. Boehm: — Yes, it is.

Mr. Meili: — And then in terms of the university, it's less clear to me what the process is there. Is the request going forward that the universities will decrease by 3.5 per cent, or is that sector being spared? And if so, for what reason?

Mr. Boehm: — At this time the universities are not part of this process.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you for clarifying. Given that you have the universities losing 5 per cent and the rest of the post-secondary education sector losing over 7 per cent of their funding, we expect that to result in some program changes, whether that's cutting of programs . . . I've spoken to Sask Polytechnic. They know that they will offer fewer programs now. We expect that will result in job losses. We expect that will result in tuition hikes. Can you give me a bit of a walk through the landscape, as you know it so far, of what programs are getting cut at different schools, what job losses are happening at different schools, and what tuition increases are happening at different schools?

Mr. Boehm: — So in terms of Sask Poly, we are not aware of any program changes that are planned at this point in time nor job losses, and their tuition for 2017-18 has not been released to this point. But they're in the midst of their business planning process, and we expect them on an ongoing basis to make sure they're always prioritizing programming and making sure that they're providing the most relevant programming based on industry and student need. And so we will anticipate that in the near future.

Mr. Meili: — Okay. I'd also been asking about the universities and their choices in terms of job losses, program cuts, and tuition hikes.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. In terms of the universities specifically, as I referenced earlier of course, the tuition increase at the U of S was modest. U of R's has not yet been released. There was some coverage, last week I believe it was, based on a memo sent out by the provost, interim provost, and in which he discussed certain cuts and percentages of cuts to the agriculture program and engineering college.

On the other hand, the university has said, and most recently President Stoicheff has talked about how the budget will not define it and this budget will not define it, and of course it remains fully autonomous in terms of the decisions that it makes and the priorities that it sets. And I trust that the universities, like government, will look inward and perhaps somewhat transformationally in some areas. I know President Stoicheff spoke quite generally but did speak about culture change within the university specifically and as I say, it remained a, you know, somewhat of a general comment. But I think we don't know very much at this point beyond that about specific plans in terms of programming and so on.

Mr. Meili: — And the University of Regina, any further details there?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Well as I referenced, their tuition rates have not yet been released and beyond that, there hasn't been a great deal more commentary.

Mr. Meili: — Okay. Thank you for that. One of the things that has . . . So what I think we are seeing is there's likelihood of, and there's been indication of likelihood of, tuition increases at some of these institutions and, albeit not a large increase at U of S, there is an increase there.

Something else that immediately increases the cost of education for students is the elimination of the tax deduction for tuition. So that's a tuition hike by another name, given that those students who are working, or families who are paying for tuition and able to claim that deduction, have now very suddenly seen those numbers increase. I'd like some numbers on that. How many people in the province were accessing that tuition deduction? And what are the numbers in terms of the average that those families or individual students are now going to be forgoing in terms of the rebate? How is this going to affect people and how many people will it affect?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — So, Mr. Meili, if you're referencing the education tax credits . . . And that you will have to direct to the Minister of Finance for greater detail. As you've basically referenced, the 2017-18 budget eliminates the education and tax credits. It's effective July 1 and the way it's going to work is that unused amounts carried forward from previous taxation years will remain available to be claimed. New credits cannot be earned after June 30th.

And beyond that, I'll only say that this is something that is happening across the country. The federal government eliminated its education tax credit. Ontario and New Brunswick are eliminating both tuition and education tax credits. BC's budget I believe is proposing to end education tax credits after the 2017 tax year.

But of course we will be maintaining the graduate retention program. And the graduate retention program, as I have pointed out previously and as you will know, is the most aggressive youth retention and attraction program in the country. It's provided over \$345 million to over 70,000 young people to stay in or move to Saskatchewan after they graduate. And as has been referenced, it has been called free tuition, ". . . so generous," one expert wrote, "that literally everyone ends up receiving more in subsidy than they pay in tuition." So the GRP remains in place. The tax credit you referenced, not. But further questions on the details and the numbers and so on will have to be directed to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Meili: — That's a bit disappointing given that that's a cut that will directly affect students in advanced education that those numbers aren't available. That would have been a wise thing to be able to understand, and I would assume you were part of those discussions in making that decision given that it affects students so much.

But when you look at the graduate retention program, that's something that happens after people graduate. They have to be

able to make that decision prior to going into school that they're going to be able to afford school. A recent study at the University of Saskatchewan showed that 39.5 per cent of students reported food insecurity, so the inability to afford healthy food.

Recent information from Statistics Canada shows that Saskatchewan has seen a plummeting rate in the number of lower income students accessing higher education. Where we were in 2001-2002 the best province in Western Canada in terms of people in the lower quintile accessing post-secondary education, now we are the worst by a factor of two. We're in very bad shape, and it's been a descending line.

For those students coming in to education, when they're going to be likely facing higher tuition, where that tuition tax credit or the education tax credits are removed, how are you going to . . . We've already seen this occurring as a problem in the province. What's your plan to make sure that lower income students are able to afford higher education?

[21:15]

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Well thank you for the question, Mr. Meili. I think you referenced a few things in there, one of which was this report, and I think that the context is very important in regards . . . the analysis of that. I mean for one thing, the report that you're referencing mentions how wage increases during the resource boom in the early 2000s tended to reduce full-time university enrolment rates. And there's quite a lot of complex data in there. International students, for example, is my understanding, don't show up in the data that has increased in terms of numbers quite substantially. It's also important to note that despite tuition freezes that the previous government imposed, declining enrolment among the lower income sample group that's referenced in that report that you mentioned still continued.

And according to the 2009 *Commission on Tuition Fees and Accessibility to Post-Secondary Education in Manitoba*, and I quote, "In Saskatchewan, participation [in post-secondary education] actually fell between 2005 and 2006 even though tuition fees declined in that year."

And again, I would go back. You mentioned the GRP as a back-end program, and in contrast to that I think it's very important that we keep in mind that there's a balance here at play. There is the graduate retention program, which is a tuition rebate program, but there is also the universal Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship program which is going strong, and that is \$500 per year for 4 years — so \$2,000 in direct tuition relief for students.

And I know that just — if you'll bear with me for one moment here, sorry — just that the member for Regina Elphinstone, your colleague of course, once recommended when he was minister that the government ". . . fully fund a tuition reduction per academic year for undergrads." And of course, that's what we did, and we fund that \$2,000 over four years as part of the Sask Advantage Scholarship.

And again as I've referenced previously, this year alone 137 million in supports to students through loans, scholarships,

bursaries, and grants, including not only SAS, Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, but the graduate retention program as well. And of course as you'll be aware, there is reform under way to the loan program which is also about moving funding forward. And so it's a balance, and I think it's very well balanced.

Mr. Meili: — You mention the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, \$500 a year. That was in the 2016 provincial election. A platform promise was to increase that to \$750 a year. Another platform promise in that same election was the development of the first home program, a graduate retention-type program that gave people \$10,000 to purchase a first home. So that has also been cancelled, I understand, and that increase from 500 to 750 did not happen.

I guess the questions there are: one, in terms of platform promises, one certainly must wonder how much we can trust the word of this government given that that was not carried through or one that was carried through was cancelled 10 months later; and secondly, you know, back to that question around planning, the ability for students to look at a platform and say, good, there'll be another 750 there or look at a program launched and announced, start to make plans to buy that first home, and now be told that that's not available.

So I'm wondering what you would say to those students. They're expecting to be able to believe in the programs that had been announced.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Yes, thank you for that, Mr. Meili. I think it's very important to be clear on what you've referenced as the campaign promise in that regard. And the absolutely clear campaign promise vis-a-vis the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship was that it would increase to \$750 if fiscal realities allowed. And I guess we can all agree that this year was probably not the year to increase that scholarship to 750 from 500. So there's nothing inconsistent about that. That was the clear promise, and that remains the case and certainly the undertaking for the future. But as I say, that was the promise, and nothing has been broken by any means. And I think it's very important to clarify that.

As for first home, you will have to ask that of the Minister for Social Services. It is a Social Services-run program. Again, just the information that is just generally available is that it is currently being suspended, not cancelled but suspended, for 2017-18, and commitments already made will be met, and graduates already in the program will have 90 days to complete their purchase agreement.

I'm certainly more than proud of the 400 graduates with the down payment on their first home. Four million in loans was advanced to help make home ownership a reality for these students, and again just due to the fiscal climate, this program has been suspended for now, and further information and questions will have to be directed to the Minister for Social Services.

Mr. Meili: — The fiscal climate was likely better understood than communicated in that provincial election, but we'll leave that for the time being.

I'm curious to understand a bit more of the changes to the student loan program. It's not super clear, the way that it's set out, exactly what is going on here. We've got talk about the new provincial grant. Does that replace loans, or is this in addition to student loans, or what's exactly happening there, please?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you for that, Mr. Meili, and again I'll try to explain a little bit of the background and of the current reality if you'll just bear with me on that then. So the most important piece to this, I guess, is that we are harmonizing with changes that the federal government is making. And so we are introducing a new \$1,000 upfront grant for students who apply for student loans. And we believe that this will make funding more predictable, more targeted to students who need it the most.

So lower income students in a typical eight-month program will receive about \$4,000 in combined federal-provincial grants and combined with the Sask Advantage Scholarship, 4,500. And I think the great upside here is that students will know where they're at, exactly what funding is available, so that they and their families can make decisions in advance and plan for their post-secondary education.

Also students who qualify for assistance will be asked to make a fixed contribution to the overall cost of their education. That will range from \$1,500 to 3,000 depending on their previous year's income, but again this will allow students to work without having to worry about a reduction in the level of financial assistance after the fact.

And I think we can all agree that the way the system is set up currently, it is quite cumbersome. Bureaucratically, it is subject to mini-audits on student's income, for example, which students don't appreciate, which we understand. And I think that this will simplify things. And also I think it's important to point out that it will correct the balance in terms of the overall program and get us closer to what was supposed to be the federal-provincial breakdown of student assistance in the first place, which was 60/40 — so us, 40 — which I think is also important.

Mr. Meili: — That work element is interesting. Should the student make more than the amount that's prescribed there, will those mini-audits still take place, or are students now going to be able to earn as much as they like? And if a student isn't able to work, for any reason, or they don't find work, they don't make the amount posted there, are they not going to be eligible for student supports?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Yes, it's an excellent question. And again I mean that flat rate contribution will be fixed, so students can work as little or as much as they like. And so for those students who qualify for assistance, that will be means tested at the beginning of study but not changed or, as I said, mini-audited during the course of study. So we feel that's more transparent. Students won't be penalized if they've worked outside school, for example. And so the overall amount is fixed in that regard.

Mr. Meili: — And should a student not be able to pay, if they don't have that opportunity to work, are they ineligible for student support?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Yes, so just to clarify on that. So that is based on the formula, and so the expectation would be that at a minimum they would contribute 1,500. And as my officials say, that could be from grandma, that could be from work, that could be from whatever means. But that is the expectation: that in order to participate in the program that way, that would be the basic amount, flat rate, fixed that they would be expected to contribute.

Mr. Meili: — And you've decreased the budget for student support by \$8 million, and I'm assuming that some of those savings happen in this change. Is that because we're seeing less support per student, or are we dropping the number of students that are receiving support significantly because that's a pretty big shift.

[21:30]

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you. I'll just correct the number, Mr. Meili, from eight. It's actually 6.3 million. I'm just going to get Ms. Bloor Cavers to go into that just a bit more in detail.

Mr. Meili: — So we see a decrease from 56,455 to 49,735. So yes, that would have us closer to seven. I suppose that's true.

Ms. Bloor Cavers: — Hi, I'm Tammy Bloor Cavers, assistant deputy minister, sector relations and student services. So just in response or in clarification to your question, the 6.3 reduction is relative to the Student Aid Fund which is a separate component of the ministry's budget, and that's the reduction component that's relative to the fund.

So if I may, I'll just talk a little bit about the expenses that are relative to the fund and what makes up the total of 26.2. So there's a number of costs that are associated with the operation of the Student Aid Fund in terms of the issuing of disbursements and loans and supporting the level of grants as it relates to the introduction of the new program this year. So I'll just give you a listing. And I'm just referencing the annual report, the '15-16 annual report from the Student Aid Fund, if you're interested in seeing some of the detail from last year's expenditures.

So just to give you an example of the former program, there was costs associated with the former bursaries that are now considered to be up-front grants through the new program. There's a number of flow-through items that the federal government issues through the province itself, and we simply issue those grants. They're smaller amounts in grants for . . . Students with dependants, as an example, was a flow-through item through the Student Aid Fund.

There's costs associated with subsidizing the interest costs associated with the disbursement levels. So any loan that is issued, as you may be aware, there's interest subsidies during the period of time that students are in school. So there's costs associated with that.

There's also costs associated with the repayment assistance plan, and that's a safety net program that's available to borrowers in the event that they have difficulties repaying following the completion of their program. There's costs associated with that.

There is the nurse loan forgiveness program that also flows through the Student Aid Fund that is supported through that funding, and that program has continued. There's permanent disability and death benefits that are associated with those funds. There's a bad debt allowance in the event there's bad debt associated with default on loans. There's always a requirement to book those expenditures when the loans are disbursed. You may be aware that we have a service provider that provides a number of services on behalf of the Government of Canada as well as Government of Saskatchewan through our integrated agreement with Canada.

Mr. Meili: — If I may, I just thank you for that, and I appreciate the clarification on the contents of that fund. The question still remains, however, where the difference is. And if you say the difference is primarily in the shift from bursaries to grants, has that resulted in less actual support being available for students, and is that because there is less per student or there are fewer students receiving support?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Meili. I guess just to clarify, so that the overall level of assistance remains the same. It's just in terms of the shift in emphasis in that regard. And again I mean, just to give you one example of how this will work, and we have a number of categories, representative categories. So for the average dependent student so-called whose family income is below 60,000, their debt per year will actually decrease under these changes from 7,200 currently to 6,500. But for the average independent student so-called who's been out of school for four years or more or working for two, and this is the most typical student that this program funds overall, their debt will go up 800 a year. So it will go up not highly significantly, but it will go up. So those are two examples of changes. One decrease, one a slight increase.

Mr. Meili: — So that's where your savings lie? That's where the 6 million comes from, in that some students will be paying more and will wind up with more debt? Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is, as we referenced and I referenced in the previous answer, some re-shifting from lower to higher needs students, as referenced and demonstrated by those examples, and so to those in some cases who will need it the most. And again I think those examples are very representative of that shift, that in the category of the average dependent student whose family income is below 60,000, their debt per year will actually decrease from 7,200 to 6,500.

The Chair: — We have now reached the time of adjournment. We were scheduled to go till 9:30, and because of the recess, we went a little bit longer. So you will have this opportunity another day to enjoy this scintillating debate. So, Madam Minister, if you have any closing, final remarks for today, you may go ahead.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, only that I hope I kept you in high scintillation throughout and would just simply like to thank you and our colleague from Hansard, the members of the committee, Mr. Meili, Ms. Sproule, and certainly my chief of staff, and all our officials here this evening who work so very hard and conscientiously every single day to do the best for our students in this province. So thank you very much, Mr.

Chair.

The Chair: — Mr. Meili, do you have any closing comments you'd like to make?

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to everyone who spent this lovely evening together, and I appreciate the efforts on the part of the minister and the staff to answer the questions as clearly as possible. Have a good night.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you. I wonder if I could have a member move that we adjourn. Mr. Nerlien. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This committee stands adjourned to the call of the Chair, week after next. Thank you very much and good night.

[The committee adjourned at 21:40.]