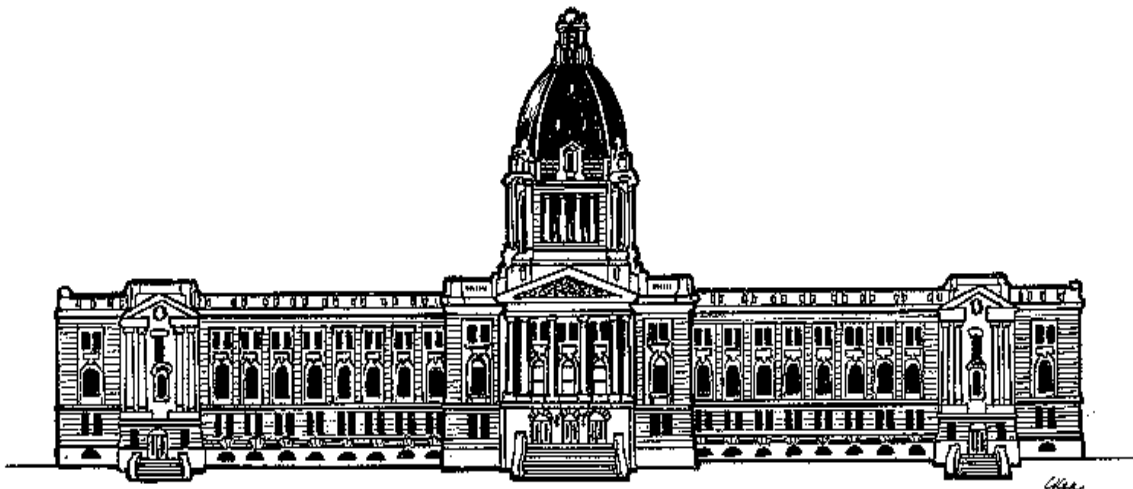




STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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Hon. Jim Reiter
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Ms. Joceline Schriemer
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[The committee met at 19:00.]

The Chair: — Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Seeing as it's 7 o'clock, the chosen hour for our committee meeting to begin, we'll call this meeting to order. I would like to welcome everyone to this evening's deliberations in the Standing Committee on Human Services. The members tonight are voting members Mr. Glen Hart, Ms. Doreen Eagles, Minister Jim Reiter, and Ms. Joceline Schriemer, as well as Mr. Cam Broten. And substituting for Ms. Judy Junor tonight will be Mr. Len Taylor.

**General Revenue Fund
Advanced Education, Employment and Labour
Vote 37**

Subvote (AE01)

The Chair: — We are now looking at the main and supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, vote 37, central management and services (AE01), as outlined on page 30 of the Estimates booklet; with the supplementary estimates outlined on page 11 of the November Supplementary Estimates booklet, General Revenue Fund; as well as vote 169, Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, lending and investing activities, outlined on page 162 of the Estimates booklet.

Before we begin, I'd invite Mr. Minister Norris to make any opening comments and introduce his officials. And as officials come to the mics, I'd ask them to just introduce themselves the first time for the purposes of Hansard, and welcome.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and committee members for another opportunity to discuss the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour's budget estimates. I'd certainly like to just begin by making some introductions, importantly, Clare Isman. I think many of you have had an opportunity to meet Clare. Reg Urbanowski. Clare's our deputy minister; Reg Urbanowski, assistant deputy minister, advanced education and student services.

And then back in behind me, Mike Carr, associate deputy minister, labour, employee and employer services; Rupen Pandya, assistant deputy minister, immigration services; Karen Allen, executive director of corporate services; Rhiannon Stromberg, senior executive assistant to our deputy minister and a person that seems to know absolutely everything that's going on, regardless of where or when, and we applaud her for that.

Joe Black has joined us, CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission; Ann Lorenzen, executive director, quality assurance and really one of the champions of progress being made on First Nations University; Tammy Bloor Cavers, executive director, student financial assistance, another tireless worker; Ted Amendt, executive director of program innovation. We're delighted to have Ted onside.

Dion McGrath, executive director of public institutions and infrastructure, doing a solid job for us; Jan Morgan, tireless worker and a great source and sense of humour, executive

director, career and employment services. And I think I've seen some others as well: Kirk Westgard, I think, the director of Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program. There may be others. And what I would propose to do is just simply make introductions as needed if and as those relevant discussion points come forward.

Given that I began the last session with quite an extensive opening statement, I thought it would probably be appropriate for us to maximize our time tonight, Mr. Chair, if and as appropriate through your good offices that we just proceed directly into the queries.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We'll open up the floor to committee members. Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister, for being here. And thank you to all the many officials here who are here for the next few hours and presumably a few hours tomorrow as we also spend time on estimates. I believe it was communicated in email, and I didn't hear in the minister's opening comments any of the specifically labour folks. I mean I won't be asking any questions as Mr. Iwanchuk isn't here, I think that's clear, but we'll focus on the post-secondary and immigration things this evening.

Starting off, Mr. Minister, is Carlton Trail Regional College being dismantled and merged with St. Peter's College?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Really appreciate the question. This question appears to me to be prompted by a news release put out yesterday by SGEU [Saskatchewan Government Employees Union] that I will simply say is ill-informed, unfortunate, and quite, in a straightforward manner, incorrect. And I'll begin by offering a couple of points in response to this news release, and I think then I can respond in a little more detail if the member has some additional questions.

Along the way, it seems that maybe some statements that have been made may have been missed. And that is as of July 10, 2009, as an announcement was being made at St. Peter's College, Glen Kobussen, the CEO of Carlton Trail and President of St. Peter's College, said this: "This new partnership . . . will enable us to be more responsive and innovative, allowing us to better fulfill the needs of all our stakeholders."

And so that day offered a clear signal that the Carlton Trail Regional College and St. Peter's were interested in pursuing enhanced opportunities for partnership. And I say enhanced because it's been a long-standing practice that these two entities and institutions have co-operated previously. For example, St. Peter's has offered university courses that have been able to benefit the students of Carlton Trail. So I just want to put that there's nothing new here. The notion of a strategic partnership has certainly its roots within that community.

A second point that's made by this news release. It says there are concerns ". . . that costly renovations to St. Peter's College will mean less money for programming and services to students and other small communities within the region." Of course that tells a small portion of a very important story.

First of all, St. Peter's is a pretty special institution, affiliated institution, affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan and looking to enhance its collaboration with the University of Saskatchewan. As we first came to office, a request was put in for somewhere in excess of \$12 million for that institution. The conversation was interesting, and I said, you know, I just don't envision us being able to do very much, but can we explore ways to think about fundraising and maybe some matching.

Well St. Peter's went out, given its illustrious alumni and very significant alumni, raised \$3 million. The provincial government was able to match that as part of our government's efforts to help address the infrastructure deficit that we inherited. At that very moment — so there was about \$6 million moving forward — the federal government came forward with its knowledge infrastructure program and offered to match dollars, those put forward by provincial governments, but also other entities. And so it's somewhere in the range of \$12 million; it's over \$12 million because the federal government was able to come forward. Very significant fundraising initiated this. That same grassroots support certainly informed our decision to match it for three as the federal government was rolling out its initiative for 12, and so a total of 12.

What the unfortunate tone of the release is that somehow St. Peter's was offered a special deal. And I'm happy to report that . . . And I'll go back to a more recent event and that was March 9th, 2010, as our Deputy Premier and myself were in Humboldt for the announcement that the Humboldt education centre would be moving forward, an initiative worth more than \$4 million.

And again I'll go back to quote Mr. Kobussen:

Carlton Trail Regional College is excited to move to the next stage in realizing a new home that will include both administrative offices and classrooms . . . The new facility will enable us to continue to broaden and strengthen program delivery to the east central region of Saskatchewan.

And so what we have is more than \$16 million of investment, some of which has been privately donated, some of which has been invested by the provincial government, some of which has been invested by the federal government. And certainly the reports that we receive, both institutions — and as they look at a strategic partnership on a go-forward basis — have pretty remarkable trajectories given the recent investments in infrastructure. So that would be another point.

I think what I'll do is also highlight, just say more broadly, that the news release begins by saying, "The Brad Wall government's plan to dismantle the Carlton Trail Regional College points to the privatization of public post-secondary education in Saskatchewan . . ." This is an outrageous statement, and one that is irresponsible. Our government's track record on investing in post-secondary education is worth more than \$1.6 billion.

Specifically as it relates to our very significant regional colleges, and I'll come back to a point here, what we've seen is, since coming in, more than . . . That is, since the Saskatchewan Party has taken office, \$140 million in investments regarding

our colleges. And so this notion that a grassroots proposal to enhance co-operation, thereby improving the student experience, could somehow undermine (a) the regional college system — which is robust; we have over 40 campuses serving the needs of 24,000 full-time, part-time, and casual learners — is it's more than unfortunate. And it's important for us to put on the public record that our regional college system is strong.

Our post-secondary education system is strong, including two universities both recognized within their respective categories — that is medical doctoral, and comprehensive — being in the top 10. And certainly I want to make sure that the context is clear. Our support for post-secondary education is setting records, and as it pertains to the regional college system, robust.

As it pertains to the dialogue going under way between these two organizations, each institution has undertaken dialogue with a variety of community stakeholders. For the government, we are now in a position to begin undertaking consultations. They'll be broad and I'm, you know, certainly open-minded enough to say that if two post-secondary institutions within a stone's throw of each other want to explore opportunities for collaboration or co-operation or strategic partnership, this government is listening to rural communities in the province of Saskatchewan.

An example of this is, as we came into office, there was an additional regional college. And what we saw was enhanced collaboration and co-operation that has seen the creation of the Great Plains regional college in southwestern Saskatchewan, completely grassroots driven. The notion there again, helping to ensure that there are enhanced services for students and other stakeholders across the broad southwestern region. And given certainly the success of that movement, we're not going to stand in the way of dialogue and deliberation as far as opportunities and options for additional collaboration or strategic partnership between St. Peter's and Carlton Regional Trail.

The quote, and I'll go back the SGEU news release:

There has been virtually no public discussion about this merger, and what it will mean both for the Carlton Trail region, and for the future of public regional colleges across the province.

[19:15]

Again, I'm going to refer back to the very public . . . It was a beautiful day. It was a beautiful morning where Professor Kobussen offered that this new partnership . . . This is July 10th, 2009, last July. We were there, one of our several visits. And I don't know if the member has had an opportunity to see the construction under way at St. Pete's. It's worth doing. This new partnership will enable us to be more responsive and innovative, allowing us to better fulfill the needs of all of our stakeholders.

And I would say again, to reiterate, the news release is unfortunate. It's ill-informed. And my sense is it distorts the progress that has been made (a) by this government, and more importantly by stakeholders in and around Humboldt and the broader region. They're looking at ways to enhance the student experience, and I want to applaud them for that. And I am

deeply disappointed in this kind of press release.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question wasn't motivated from the press release. In the minister's comments, you referred to the situation between Carlton Trail Regional College and St. Peter's College as a strategic partnership, I believe was the phrase that the minister used. In the minister's opinion, is that the correct terminology? Would he also support the use of the word merger?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well as I've tried to highlight, the process is under way. The respective institutions are legally separate institutions. As they look at areas of collaboration and the types of co-operation that institutions certainly are afforded the opportunity to do under our government, as that begins to take some shape and substance, certainly we're attentive to that.

We then undertake our own work. We then undertake our work. I don't know if the member opposite wants to jump into the debate and the discussion. That for us means that we'll go through due process and consultative process. How that turns out, it will be an iterative process that goes back and forth. We'll begin to see how this partnership, strategic partnership, or if there's a continuum of collaboration, where that leads, what that looks like. But certainly grassroots driven, community driven and, while undertaking our due diligence, open-minded enough to allow the institutions to explore a range of options.

Mr. Broten: — So would the minister describe the proposed relationship between St. Peter's College and Carlton Trail College as a merger? Yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, I think what I'll do is I'll go back to the July 10, 2009 announcement. That was the knowledge infrastructure announcement, and Professor Kobussen called it this new partnership. And that's on the record. What that partnership, the shape and substance of it, we will see where that leads. Again, undertaking our due diligence, we're just getting that under way now, but also taking into consideration the views of the respective institutions as well as a range of other stakeholders.

Mr. Broten: — So would the minister say that the current conversation between Carlton Trail and St. Peter's is about a merger?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, Mr. Chair, what I'm happy to do is make reference to the July 10th, 2009 KIP [knowledge infrastructure program] announcement that took place on a lovely, lovely morning at St. Peter's College where we had the announcement. And we went on a, went on a tour of some of the construction work that was already getting under way. Very pleased with the progress that was made as quickly as it was. That was one of the conditions of those KIP dollars, knowledge infrastructure dollars, the federal government came forward.

We had over 20 projects worth more than \$117 million on a go-forward basis. This was one of those. Again, the fundraising efforts of St. Peter's College with a very illustrious alumni, and those alumni really played a vital role in having key fundraising events and making sure that that network was aware of the potential for moving forward.

As the KIP announcement was made, the announcement again in public with media present, and I'll make reference to Professor Kobussen again. He called it then a new partnership. And the contours, the shape, the substance, that we will see on a go-forward basis, and we'll be undertaking our own due diligence on this as well.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Yes, I do remember, I believe it was last estimates we talked quite extensively about the knowledge infrastructure program. And thank you for those comments that were made concerning the announcement at St. Peter's.

Right now the discussion occurring around St. Peter's and Carlton Trail, so you would definitely describe it as a strategic partnership and not as an merger.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I'll go back to what I have just drawn on, Mr. Chair, and committee members. That is July 10th. It was identified as a new partnership, and you know from there, the shape and substance of how that moves forward is obviously being considered by the respective institutions and certainly will be considered by the ministry as we will undertake our due diligence on this.

Mr. Broten: — Has there been discussions with the minister about specific plans concerning a merger of St. Peter's and Carlton Trail Regional College?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We'll go to the March 9th event, March 9th, 2010. As I said, the Deputy Premier and myself as well as a range of other stakeholders were there. It was one of those great days. The gym was packed and school spirit was high because at last, again helping to address the inherited infrastructure deficit that our government certainly confronted, the people of the province have had to endure after prolonged NDP [New Democratic Party] rule . . . But that day was special. The smiles were hearty and sincere on the students.

And you asked specifically about being briefed. I arrived some minutes ahead of the Deputy Premier. I had an opportunity to have a very brief conversation, informal, with a couple of the stakeholders and one of my officials — that was on March 9th — regarding progress that was being made on the partnership. And that's the last time that I have participated in any of the discussion.

What was agreed to at that point is that ministry officials would work with local stakeholders. And again as the respective institutions and the ministry considered steps along the path of due diligence, that's the last time — if that's the nature of the question — that's the last time.

It seems to me one of the questions, Mr. Chair, is around the definition of the word merger, and if the member would like to drill down into that, then maybe he can offer some insight as far as what he is talking about. What I'd hate to do is, in any way, slow the debate over semantics.

What I'm doing is quoting public speeches that were made in front of the media, in front of many stakeholders, and this one here as it related to: "The new facility will enable us to continue to broaden and strengthen program delivery to the east central

region of Saskatchewan.” Again Professor Kobussen offered those remarks on that day. So if there’s, if there’s more clarity that I can offer on this, happy to do so.

Mr. Broten: — Well just off the top of my head, I would say a merger is two becoming one. Mr. Chair, I do want to say any questions I have about Carlton Trail or St. Peter’s College is not in any way commenting on the record of any institution or the individuals who attended that institution or the reputation of that institution, anything along those lines. Questions I ask, as it is the role of the opposition, is to simply seek clarity on where public dollars are going, how they’re being spent, and how individuals spending them are held accountable. So that’s the motivation of any of these questions, and I clearly want to state that for the record.

So it’s the minister’s understanding that right now the situation between Carlton Trail and St. Peter’s, it’s simply a discussion. There’s been talk of a strategic partnership, but there’s no idea if that is something . . . There’s not a plan yet in terms of what type of partnership that is, whether it’s two institutions becoming one, or whether it’s some sort of arrangement, sharing students or allowing individuals to attend each institution.

Is it the minister’s understanding that right now that’s the stage of the conversation, that it’s simply a strategic partnership? There’s a recognition by members in discussion that there could be a benefit gained by having some sort of strategic partnership, as the minister said, and beyond that it’s quite open. Is that the minister’s understanding at this time?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I think as I’ve said, I’m not going to, I’m not going to preclude or pass judgment on what those range of options are. If we think about a continuum of two autonomous, independent institutions working in isolation to a range of other options, I’m not going to preclude what those options would look like. What we have said is, as the discussions and deliberations continue between the organizations, two separate legal organizations, as they continue, we’ll certainly be mindful of their recommendations. But we’ll also undertake our own due diligence (a) on behalf of the institutions and (b) on behalf of the broader communities, and most especially those students. I think that’s, I think that’s one of the key roles and responsibilities of the ministry and of the government.

[19:30]

What that looks like and, you know, where that leads, there have been a variety of, a variety of informal conversations I’m sure right across the institutional networks and probably well out beyond those immediate institutions. So I’m not going to preclude where that may lead. And what I am saying is the notion of a new partnership, the notion of a new partnership is not new. It’s not a year old, but last July it was announced as we did the KIP announcement and those discussions, the deliberations will continue.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The description that you’ve provided in terms of it being sort of an open discussion with not really knowing how it will end at this point, it’s a little bit puzzling. Because I mean prior to the SGEU news release,

there’s certainly people have been talking in the community about this because as you said, dating back some time there was talk, a topic, there was mention of a strategic partnership.

I have a document here that appears to be fairly recent, and it’s a document that has St. Peter’s College logo on it. And it’s a call for board members. And I believe it’s fairly recent because it says “Applications must be post-marked no later than 4:00 p.m., April 30, 2010.” And the call for applications here states:

St. Peter’s College and Carlton Trail Regional College are planning to merge into a unique, learner-centred, educational institution that will provide a wide spectrum of university, technical and community programs and classes. The proposed entity [one] will create new and dynamic efficiencies for the delivery of post-secondary education in the Province of Saskatchewan.

To better meet the needs of the learners, communities and regions served by the proposed organization, SPC is adopting a new governance model that includes the creation of a new Board. Members of the new Board will be asked to provide input and guidance to the College.

St. Peter’s College (SPC) Bylaws provides for membership on the SPC Board by area/sector, individuals at-large and organizations that, in the opinion of the Board, contribute in a significant way to the social, economic and cultural welfare of Saskatchewan; and have demonstrated interest in furthering the goals of higher education and research at SPC.

The new Board will be comprised of twelve (12) members: the Chancellor, three (3) appointments (i.e., President, Vice-President and one member of the Benedictine Community); and eight (8) elected positions, with three (3) of the eight (8) Board positions being elected from the newly established Senate.

Applications for the Board will be reviewed by the Membership Committee, which will forward its recommendation(s) to a meeting and vote of the Senate and current Board.

Full details of the application process and application form can be found at www.stpeterscollege.ca.

Applicants must complete the entire application form and mail to:

Membership Committee
Box 40
Muenster, SK S0K 2Y0

Applications must be post-marked no later than 4:00 p.m., April 30, 2010.

And then there’s a form attached to it, where it’s the nomination form and profile of the nominee, along with an area for written descriptions. There’s a criteria for assessing individuals and/or organizational eligibility for membership on St. Peter’s College board, excerpts from the SPC bylaws, for a few pages.

So I guess my question is, is this call for board members that it speaks of, a merger, one entity? Fairly developed plans in terms of what the composition of the board looks like. To me that seems like a few steps along the road of strategic partnership which . . . that's a discussion that certainly the committee and everyone can have. But it seems like it's more developed by having a call for applications to join the board than simply, you know, eyeing things up and seeing how perhaps a partnership in a strategic sort of way could or could not occur. So is St. Peter's College on the wrong page in terms of how developed the proposal for the strategic partnership could be, or is the ministry not aware, or is it more an issue of the availability of information? I'm wondering if the minister has any comment on that.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — If I can get a copy of that, Mr. Chair, then I'll be happy to take a key word that the member offered, and I believe that key word was proposed. But if I can get a copy of that I'll be able to confirm what I've heard.

Mr. Broten: — Yes, absolutely, and it's also available. It says for full details at stpeterscollege.ca, and it says "are planning to merge into a unique, learner-centered, educational institution." But certainly.

The Chair: — Mr. Broten, do you have any questions to continue while that's being copied?

Mr. Broten: — Certainly. So, Mr. Minister, in your remarks you commented that the current CEO of St. Peter's College is Mr. Kobussen?

A Member: — Kobussen.

Mr. Broten: — Kobussen, thank you. And is Mr. Kobussen also . . . So Mr. Kobussen is the CEO of St. Peter's College, that's correct?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That's right.

Mr. Broten: — And who is the CEO of Carlton Trail Regional College?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — He's also the CEO of Carlton Trail.

Mr. Broten: — At what point did Mr. Kobussen . . . I'm having difficulty.

A Member: — Professor Kobussen.

Mr. Broten: — Professor Kobussen. Thank you. At what point did Professor Kobussen . . . He was CEO of St. Peter's College first?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We'll get you the chronology of . . . What you're asking is kind of the dates as far as the responsibilities that have been assumed . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Okay. I believe that Mr. Kobussen took over responsibilities at Carlton Trail on April 1.

If I may, Mr. Chair, I'll just go back now that I have a copy of what the member was referring to. This is from St. Peter's College. Obviously St. Peter's is positioned to do as it will. As I

suspected and suggested, the proposed entity . . . the key word here is proposed. And so St. Peter's College is making plans or undertaking steps to help foster or facilitate that; that certainly is the discretion of St. Peter's College. The due diligence and due process from within the ministry is just starting. That process is just starting and no decision has been made on what the shape or substance is. So again, I don't preclude the shape of this partnership or collaboration, but it is to say, we're just in the midst of our deliberations. We're just getting started now.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So it's the same CEO though, right? We've established that? Of St. Peter's and Carlton Trail, is one person? One CEO?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Two separate legal entities and the same CEO.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So one individual who has duties . . . some involved with Carlton Trail Regional College and some involved with St. Peter's College?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure.

Mr. Broten: — So there's the one institution that currently exists, St. Peter's College, has put out what would appear to be fairly . . . It's a developed plan in terms of a call for board members or for applications for the board. And presumably, would you agree that the CEO would probably have knowledge of a call for that type of application?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I'd be surprised if a CEO didn't.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. And so that CEO who is the CEO of St. Peter's is also the CEO of Carlton Trail so he, presumably he would also have an understanding of the state of the situation in Carlton Trail Regional College and would be speaking on their behalf?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — One would assume.

Mr. Broten: — So if the individual who is in St. Peter's College and the individual who is in Carlton Trail College is the same person, then it would be safe to assume that whatever St. Peter's College is sending out in terms of information and call for applications, that the individual — the same individual who is in charge of Carlton Trail Regional College — would also be in favour of that . . . in favour of that position?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well as the members, as you all know, the boards are in charge and so if we have a board moving forward in this direction from St. Peter's, again explicitly stating "proposed entity," that's the discretion that would fall within that board. It doesn't necessarily follow that, that either similar pace or ideas have been accepted by the other board. I mean, these are two separate legal entities.

An example would be where academic entities might share the same dean, and that certainly happens on a regular basis.

Mr. Broten: — Usually within the same institution though, would it not usually be the case?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I think what's important here is the

proximity. I mean, they're a stone's throw from each other.

Mr. Broten: — But where a dean is shared, say at the University of Saskatchewan, serving two . . . That would be under the administrative and governance banner of the University of Saskatchewan, correct?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. This is an example where two separate entities, two different legal entities, and the CEO has responsibilities to both.

Mr. Broten: — So do you think it presents a problem for the CEO, or a challenge for the CEO, the fact that he's the same individual wearing two hats and has distinct responsibilities to each group that he represents?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I think that would be up to the boards.

Mr. Broten: — Sorry?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That would be up to the respective boards.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. When was Mr. Kobussen, Professor Kobussen . . . You said he started as the CEO of Carlton Trail Regional College on April 1, 2010?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — And who appointed him as CEO of the board? The CEO of Carlton Trail?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It's a board appointment.

Mr. Broten: — A board appointment. And how are the board members of Carlton Trail Regional College — how do they become board members?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We're just getting a list of the actual board members.

The Chair: — Committee members, while we're waiting, I'll table document 56/26 provided by Mr. Broten, St. Peter's College call for board members.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Process, Mr. Chair, is vetted through the ministry. A variety of colleges and institutions are increasingly going to skills matrix, and then ultimately approved by the minister.

Mr. Broten: — So that . . . Then that is, just to be clear, that's the process how board members are selected?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Once again names are submitted and due process is undertaken, and then approval's been given by the minister.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So names are generated. They go through a vetting process of some sort, and then the minister signs off, and then those individuals become board members of whatever institution, whatever regional college.

So when a candidate selection process occurs for CEO, for CEO

of a regional college, what does that process normally look like? How is it conducted and how is that individual selected? You mentioned that it's through the board, but please expand on that process.

[19:45]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Again certainly there are governance workshops that we hold on a regular basis for board members, but the process is one that's determined by their respective boards. The last piece I'll just add in, on the advice of the minister, it's presented to cabinet for board members, for board appointment.

Mr. Broten: — So an individual who is interested in being CEO of a regional college, if there's a vacancy in a regional college, the board reviews applicants, does the interview process, narrows it down to an individual, and then that regional college board submits it to the minister who reviews it. And then once the minister approves, it's provided to cabinet for a cabinet decision? Is that how I understood it?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No, I'm sorry. We've crossed the two up. On the previous question regarding board members, they're ultimately approved by cabinet. On the question relating to the CEOs, yes, the board has the final word on the CEO.

Mr. Broten: — With respect to the . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — An example would be, for example, we've got a relatively new CEO out in Southeast. And so I mean, there's an interview process, a vetting process. And the board made the distinction and that's Craig Brown, if I'm not mistaken, and he was selected based on his merits.

Mr. Broten: — Okay, thank you. So in the selection of CEO of the . . . I'm sorry, I'll back up one second. Were you endeavouring to get the names of the board members of . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, we'll do that. We'll just print them off and have them here for the committee members.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So for the selection of a CEO of a regional college, just out of curiosity, what's the salary range for a CEO? I'm just curious.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — There is a compensation framework for all the CEOs, and essentially that creates a bandwidth. And obviously we want a high degree of consistency here; ballpark is somewhere between 80 and 110.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. So when there is a vacancy for a CEO and the board is obviously charged with finding a new CEO to serve at the helm of the institution, could you please outline how that procedure normally unfolds? Is a recruiting firm often used? Is there a call for applications? Is it posted in papers? How are possible candidates identified and interviewed? And once that process occurs, how does the . . . is it a recommendation that's provided to the board?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Again, the ministry is not involved in that process. And so there would be, one would imagine, a range of initiatives or activities undertaken by the various regional

colleges.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So when a regional college identifies an individual . . . so I guess if there's no set expectation how that is done, it can be done through a variety of ways, everything from a headhunter organization to an ad in the newspaper posted by the board, to a referral by someone, something like that? It's whatever the board decides is a good approach?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — As we said, the ministry is not involved in that. That would be at the institutional level.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. So at what point, when the regional college finds a person, interviews them, decides that this is the man or woman they want to be the CEO, how is that information relayed to the minister, and at what stage is that information relayed to the minister?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We'll ask Reg Urbanowski just to highlight when the ministry is alerted to the selection of the board and then how it rolls forward from there.

Mr. Urbanowski: — When an individual is selected, the name comes forward to the ministry for consideration within a compensation framework. And it's through that, it's through the compensation framework, it's not through the selection of the individual, but it's rather how the various benefits and compensations would be applied through the contract. So we're . . . Because we've got the framework in the ministry, we apply that to the individual.

Mr. Broten: — So the individual that's been selected comes forward or is submitted by the board to the minister. The individual is reviewed, and then the ministry slots him or her into a pay grade, essentially, within that earlier range that we spoke of?

Mr. Urbanowski: — Usually what will happen is the board may make a recommendation in where they would like to put the person in terms of the salary range or some of the other benefits that are there. And then we'll review that against the compensation framework.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. When the board submits that name to the minister, is the selection of that CEO a done deal? Is it completely set in stone?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, that decision is already made prior to my office receiving these. Essentially the negotiation, if there is, really relates to . . . then the pay grade. But the selection's already been made.

Mr. Broten: — And as you've stated before, that selection is made exclusively by the board of the regional college?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — Is there any point that if the ministry is not satisfied or has concerns or wants to provide an opinion on a possible CEO of a regional college, is there any point where the ministry . . . Is there a structure set up that allows the ministry to step in at any point and provide an opinion?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, this is the purview of the board.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Is that list of Carlton Trail College, is it found yet, the board?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We've got it on the laptop. We'll just get it onto some paper and that way we can distribute it.

Mr. Broten: — The Clerks inform me that if you give the website address, they could print it off if that can speed things up for anyone or make life easier.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. Happy to do that.

Mr. Broten: — So the boards of regional colleges, and in this case Carlton Trail Regional College, what legislation guides the board and sets out its roles and responsibilities and how it should operate?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That's *The Regional Colleges Act*.

Mr. Broten: — So is it a safe statement to say that ultimately the boards are accountable to the minister?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Authority certainly rests with the minister, but the ministry obviously goes through its own due diligence on things as relevant as budgets. And certainly the knowledge infrastructure program; we're heavily involved in that. So infrastructure investments and other pieces like that.

Mr. Broten: — So with the selection of a CEO, with the selection of a CEO, just as the role of minister is an important one or the role of a boss on a shop floor, this is the role of anyone at the helm, in charge of things, is an important one. With the selection of a CEO at a regional college that's selecting a CEO and the significance of that decision, if the regional college board is making that kind of decision and the pay is, you know, it's definitely significant and a very important job in the role of Advanced Education; if the board is making that decision, would it be a reasonable statement to say that when the board makes that decision, and if it does go ahead and is ratified and that individual is hired, that that decision by the regional college board was accountable to the minister? The decision that that board makes, they'd have the minister's blessing when they make that kind of decision?

The Chair: — Committee members, while we're waiting for the question to be answered, a correction of the previous document was actually HUS 55/26. And the current one is board of trustees, Carlton Trail College document HUS 56/26, we'll be tabling at this time.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I'll get our deputy, Clare Isman to speak to the governance structure.

[20:00]

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the key in the overall model underneath the legislation is that the board is appointed, and the board then is held accountable for all business activities and actions related to the institution.

So they have a business plan. They have a budget. They have

policy; they make their business decisions. The ultimate accountability that the ministry then would hold them to, would be through the board. So that would be inclusive of all of the decisions that the board would take.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you so much. So with the strategic plan and all the decisions that a board has to make, would the minister agree that choosing a CEO is probably one of the more important decisions they need to make? It's fairly high up there in that with the respect to the decisions that a board undertakes.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well obviously leadership direction within an entity, a post-secondary educational institution, it's an important conversation that has to . . . and deliberation that goes on around the board, and an important decision, of course.

Mr. Broten: — So given that that is such an important decision, if the minister had concerns with the selection of a CEO, is it safe to assume that the minister would make it clear to the board that there is a concern around a particular selection of an individual, whoever that may be, in any regional college context?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well again this is the purview of the board and the board making a decision that it would have confidence in.

Mr. Broten: — But it is agreed, though, or is it agreed that the selection of CEO is an important one most certainly? And if the board had chosen a person that is not a good fit for whatever reason, would the minister present concerns to the board on that issue?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We'll let again Clare Isman speak to this hypothetical question.

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the question of the ministry would be in an assessment of any actions taken on behalf of the institution that the ministry came to light on. If we knew something, then we would obviously be obligated then to go back to the board and to ask those questions.

Mr. Broten: — But we talked a little earlier about the role of Professor Kobussen. Is that how it's pronounced?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Professor Kobussen.

Mr. Broten: — Kobussen. Thank you. And we talked about the dual roles that this individual has as CEO of St. Peter's College and CEO of Carlton Trail Regional College. In the minister's opinion, is that, is that a dual role that is wise and easily done by one person?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That would be, that would be a decision made by the board.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. With the two roles that the CEO has of St. Peter's College and Carlton Trail, I would think in the document that we spoke to earlier, the call for board members, and it talks about a planned merger into a unique, learner-centered, educational institution.

When thinking about a merger, if we use the example of a

marriage, and you have two individuals each bringing their own strengths, each bringing their own interests as well and coming together into, you know — as the marriage vows go, two become one — into one organization. The thing about a marriage is when that occurs, the two individuals are entering into it as separate units, each as an independent unit making the decision that it's appropriate to merge into one. And that's done in the Western context where two individuals decide to become married because they think that there are, beyond the affection that two people might have, there are gains in working together and being married, so it makes good sense. But these two individuals can make this decision because they're deciding on, by themselves, taking stock of who they are as an individual, as a unique entity before they become, two become one.

So to me in my thinking, if you've got the same person at the helm . . . And I recognize the boards are making the decisions, but certainly the CEO plays a very important role in providing information to the board, framing questions that the board needs to consider, weighing the pros and cons and providing the best possible advice to a board. By having that same individual wear those two hats and entering into a merger, as it's described by St. Peter's College, where two become one, to me that would be a very difficult juggling act to serve the interests of one institution and at the same time serve the best interests of the other institution simply because of the fact that these are two separate institutions, each with their own governance structure, their own responsibilities, their own pros and cons.

So that example that I gave of marriage, maybe it's a little silly, but I think it does prove a point that it's two separate organizations coming together, as St. Peter's documentation would suggest, into one.

Does the minister see any problem or does the minister recognize that that would be a very, very difficult challenge to have the same individual serve that same role for two institutions?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well importantly, we're dealing with two separate legal entities with two separate boards on an issue that the member has himself read into the record as proposed.

The due diligence from the ministry is getting under way. We want to hold extensive consultations across the region, and certainly we'll be looking forward to receiving feedback from a variety of stakeholders on outstanding issues, concerns, questions. Some may see it at as complementarity. Again, we're just beginning this process, here within the documentation that the member has provided, the notion of proposed.

So I'm not going to weigh in I think for a whole variety of reasons that are probably self-evident and prudent. And that is, it's probably best for a minister to not weigh in on the performance of a CEO. It's probably best that the respective boards undertake that kind of evaluation.

Again our deputy minister has highlighted, kind of, a process in and around that, and I think that's pretty well established. In fact I'd go so far as to say, we're working our way through another post-secondary issue that's been around since 2005 when elected officials began to kind of get involved in these things.

So I think the governance structure is pretty clear: that's up to the respective boards, the autonomy of the respective institutions within the framework of the respective Act, in this case *The Regional Colleges Act*. And I'm not going to comment on capacity, capability, competence. That's up to the respective boards.

What I can say is if there are questions, comments, concerns from those boards, the ministry — as part of the resources that we have on hand — is happy to roll up our sleeves and lend a hand as we can where we can. And certainly we try to do that on a regular basis for our regional colleges along with other post-secondary educational institutions across the province.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. So the list of the trustees, the board, that was printed off for Carlton Trail Regional College, the individuals listed on this website — which I would assume was just pulled off moments ago — the chairperson is David Code, the vice-chairperson is Marlene Latreille. The trustees include Marlene Law, Maureen Doetzel, Islay Ehlert, Aaron Behiel, Ron Bessey, and the chief executive officer is still listed as Rob Barber. Is that just . . . I assume that the website just hasn't been updated.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — If I'm not mistaken, it's the regional college website that . . .

Mr. Broten: — I guess my question is, even if it's a tad outdated, do those names correspond with what ministry records would indicate for the board composition?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Thank you. And the board composition, for the individuals listed on here, when did their terms begin on the board?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We'll come right back with that information, Mr. Chair. Thanks, Mr. Chair. The appointments would have been made it appears in '09.

Mr. Broten: — So all of the appointments to the board of Carlton Trail Regional College, all those appointments occurred while you were minister, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That's right.

Mr. Broten: — And as we stated before, am I correct in my understanding that the board members whom you appointed, they're ultimately responsible to you through *The Regional Colleges Act*?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The board as an entity is certainly responsible.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. I realize the board of St. Peter's College, I don't think it's under your responsibility. That's correct?

[20:15]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We can drill down into a bunch of detail on this. I'll just say it's autonomous.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. So given that it's autonomous, who does the . . . The board of St. Peter's College, who do they answer to?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We'll get you . . . As I say, there's some complexity on this. Couple of different pieces of legislation, and we'll just go through these.

There are two principle Acts — the St. Peter's Act and the post-secondary education and training Act.

Mr. Broten: — The question on the authority of the board, that would rest within the St. Peter's Act?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That rests within the St. Peter's Act.

Mr. Broten: — So this call for board members at St. Peter's College is put out. There is still a functioning board at St. Peter's, correct? It has not been dissolved as far as anyone knows?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, they're still robust.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Now in your earlier comments, Mr. Minister, you referred to consultation that is now going to occur, and there has been plenty of talk about consultation in this sitting of the legislature. With the talk that you mention of consultation and how, I would assume, consultation is talking to people in the area and people in the post-secondary sector, you know, the works, to get an understanding of what people are thinking and what people are wanting.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That was certainly the nature, if I may, Mr. Chair. The last conversation in March as I've made . . . March 9th, that was certainly the nature of the conversation about the importance of due diligence in consultation.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. So just as . . . Let's go back to my example of a marriage and two people coming together. When these two separate entities decide that they want to get married, in most instances you know it happens after considerable amount of time where individuals have gotten to know one another and explore the good, the bad, and the ugly, warts and all in most cases, maybe in some cases perhaps.

And the consultation, this dating period when these two people are deciding whether or not the two want to become one, usually there's fairly extensive consultation before they either, at the same time, decide they want to become married or one of the two proposes. You know, before it comes to that decision where, yes, in fact, we're going to pursue this; we're going to get married.

And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Chair, to the minister, that the call for board members is in some way that proposal that a couple might make, that a couple might have. It's a very fairly significant step. It's a call that, well, the two are going to become one, and we need to start merging two households and making some decisions on how these two separate entities are going to live as one.

So to me, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Chair, to have . . . It's a nasty habit. I try not to say "Mr. Speaker" to my own wife when I go

home. But for me, Mr. Chair, this call for board members, that sort of seems like something that would come after the process of consultation. Because the two sides, before they decide that in fact two want to become one and we need to have a good balance of things and figure out some sort of relationship that works out well, I would normally think that the consultation phase would happen before the call for board members. Do I have things backwards or is that a matter of opinion? Or does the minister have any comment that?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure, I have a comment. I think there are . . . what's important here is that there are a couple levels of consultation. One at the institutional level and the institutions have carried out their own deliberations, discussions, and consultative processes as they've seen fit.

The broader consultative process that the member makes reference to, that is, government consultation, that is just getting under way now, and hence in the document as circulated, the key word — proposed. And the ministry is just getting started with that due diligence. The work is going to inform a recommendation. That recommendation will come up through the ministry to the ADM [assistant deputy minister] and deputy minister, and then the deputy minister will make that recommendation to me. That's part of our own due process and due diligence in this. So two levels of consultation, consultation at the institutional level.

Obviously this institution has opted to move forward through the language that's available, again the notion of what's proposed, and our due diligence is just beginning. And I'll get a list here of the entities or grouped categories of stakeholders we're going to be consulting. And to date, to date what we can confirm and maybe we can get the list of . . . To date the institutions have undertaken consultations with respective communities through public meetings. They've held discussions with employees and employers. And ours are going to build on those — ours being the ministry. And we'll just get you that list here in a minute as far as stakeholders.

Mr. Broten: — So with the ministry, you mentioned a hierarchy of consultation, you know, the different levels of consultation. And I would suggest that consultation in the form of putting out a call for board members, that's a fairly public type of consultation that's, you know, gone a bit further in my opinion than talking to some mayors and some individuals, that type of thing. Would you not agree that a call for board members is a fairly significant step along that continuum?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I think the board at St. Peter's will be interested to know the opinion of the member. I think they'll certainly appreciate that. I'm not going to have an opinion on this. I can speak to the general efforts that have been made by the respective institutions. Now it's time for the due process and due deliberation of the ministry. We take that work very seriously. And again, not just to serve the interests of the institution or institutions, but to ensure that we're serving the broader interest of the community and most especially the learners in the region.

The whole notion of this partnership — I think it's important to go back to — was about making sure that these two institutions, located within a stone's throw of each other, were maximizing

resources to ensure that they were offering enhanced programming. And I'll quote again from Professor Kobussen regarding program delivery to the east central region of Saskatchewan. So that, I think that's important as they began to explore.

In a sense the discussion builds on some pre-existing strengths. And as I've said already, the institution that is St. Peter's, affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan, very well respected, has as part of an evolution of the two institutions already been offering university courses for students of the Carlton Trail Regional College. So there have been examples, tangible examples of that kind of collaboration. Again where this is going, where it's leading, there is certainly from this proposed entity . . . So moving down that continuum, we're just beginning our deliberations as far as what that looks like.

Mr. Broten: — Was the minister aware that St. Peter's College had made a call for board members for a joint board, for a merged entity?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No I wasn't, actually. I haven't seen this sheet until you handed it out today.

Mr. Broten: — Were any ministry officials aware that the board of St. Peter's College had made a call for applications for a merged entity?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — To the very best of the officials, no one has seen that. I don't . . . again, I don't know when the, I don't know when the posting occurred or . . . We can track down the source of when that was put up. I don't know. I haven't seen that.

Mr. Broten: — How . . . My question to the minister, how . . . Okay, if discussions are under way for a strategic partnership as you described it earlier, you know, a fairly significant step involving significant investments that had been made . . . And again I preface this question with the earlier comment I made, that this is in no way a criticism of St. Peter's College. This is not a criticism of Carlton Trail College. This is a line of questioning that I think, when public dollars are spent, it's appropriate that the public knows when dollars are being spent and under . . . what the arrangement is and what is occurring. That's the process for estimates.

How is it that St. Peter's College could come under the impression that the process was so far along, when in fact from what I'm hearing from the minister's statements is that the minister is stating that it's actually not that far along? It's in the very early stages. How could St. Peter's College come under that impression that discussions were so far along that they could make a call for board members for planning to merge into a "unique, learner-centered, educational institution"? How could they come under that impression?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I'll go back to the . . . July 10th, 2009. Once again, Professor Kobussen says, "This new partnership . . . will enable us to be more responsive and innovative, allowing us to better fulfil the needs of all our stakeholders."

Again, hardly a secret. Announced publicly, media there. As far

as the deliberations and as far as the pace of that dialogue, as I then offered, March 9th — a little more than a couple of months ago — I was part of an informal dialogue while at the Humboldt education centre announcement as far as the due diligence around what comes next. And you know, we'll dig out, as far as the reports from within the ministry.

[20:30]

We want to ensure that the autonomy of the institutions is balanced with public accountability, and certainly I'll state clear and for the record — and if the member has some questions on this — we have complete confidence in where public dollars have been invested. We certainly have complete confidence in the performance of these respective institutions, and you know, we're happy to do this.

As far as the intricate process of where this partnership, again to quote Professor Kobussen, where this has been our officials working again with that balance in mind, we don't want to be . . . We don't want a heavy hand in forcing institutions. At the same time, we want to make sure they're held to account, helping to foster and facilitate their work.

And I think certainly my sense from the people of these communities, they're pretty happy with both institutions. And they're happy regarding the level of investment that has been put forward between the two organizations alone — as I've said, more than \$16 million in infrastructure investment. That's highlighted with the knowledge that the Humboldt education centre is going to, is going to include not just the regional college, it's actually going to also include the high school. So again I have, I have absolutely no questions regarding public dollars here. I want to make sure we've said that for the record.

Mr. Broten: — It's a bit puzzling to me, Mr. Minister, how the language that I've heard from the ministry tonight is one that it is very preliminary, the discussions, that there was a news conference and there was talk of a strategic partnership, but then quite detailed documents being provided by at least one-half of what is planned to be a merged institution, according to one of the institutions, and to me raises some questions in terms of what page everyone is on and what information is being provided.

I see in the St. Peter's Abbey newsletter, winter-spring 2010, a newsletter providing updates on information, which is the role of newsletters, I suppose. On page 10 there's a section here that says:

In the other development, St. Peter's College and Carlton Trail Regional College are merging into one institution. SPC, based in Muenster, offers university classes and CTCRC, based in Humboldt, offers technical and trade programs. The new SPC will become a learner-centred educational institution that will be unique in the country. Glen Kobussen will continue as president of SPC after the merger. Much of the administration of CTCRC will move into Michael Hall.

In anticipation of the new SPC, changes in governance are being implemented to support and guide the new institution. A senate has been chosen comprised of 30

members from across the region and a new board is also being formed. A joint syllabus will appear this fall for the new entity. The provincial government is encouraging the merger and the legislation is expected to be in place this fall to confirm the merger.

Fairly — in terms of this newsletter providing information and update on the circumstance of the planned merger into a unique, learner-centred educational institution — fairly detailed in terms of moving administration into Michael Hall. That's a fairly specific decision. A senate has been chosen, so not only is there talk of a senate, but a senate has been chosen. Also a joint syllabus. Certainly gathering information for courses and having a joint syllabus is no small feat as well when you have different institutions teaching a similar course and joining information. That's a fairly detailed and well-developed aspect of the merger.

So I suppose all of those . . . this information here provided in St. Peter's Abbey newsletter, winter and spring 2010 is in some ways consistent with the earlier discussion that we've had about the call for board members. I think where they're . . . what is initially described as a fairly preliminary discussion about a strategic partnership is in fact fairly developed, at least from one side of the planned merger. Either the horse has left the barn and this whole process is really far along, or one side of the equation is certainly under a different understanding than what at least what my understanding is of the ministry's answers in terms of how far along this process is.

Here's a question: would the minister agree that when it comes to plans for moving administration into Michael Hall; when it comes to plans for — well not plans — when it comes to actually selecting 30 senators from across the region; and when it comes to a plan for a joint syllabus, I assume if it's a joint syllabus, there has to be some communication from Carlton Trail Regional College. And talk of moving administration buildings, I would think that would be part of it too. Would the minister agree that that's a fairly developed plan of a merger?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well it certainly has aspirations. As far as the accuracy, as far as what that looks like, you know, the diligence, and again I'm not precluding that these organizations may unify, or to borrow from your phrase that there may be a marriage. What I can tell you right now is, the due process that the two institutions have gone through is separate and apart from the due process that the ministry's going through, and we're just getting started on that process.

Our consultative process is going to include a survey and cover letter sent to relevant stakeholders including post-secondary institutions; Enterprise Saskatchewan offices, relevant ones; municipalities, towns, and villages; industry partners; First Nations and Métis organizations; labour representatives, among others.

That letter and survey will then be, will then come back into the ministry for our own due process and due diligence. I'm not ruling out, and I think I've been clear in saying this, what that looks like along that continuum. Not ruling it out, but certainly our due process is just getting under way.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So this planned merger of two separate

entities into one — made separately, according to what the minister has told us tonight; two separate boards making a decision to come together — the recently appointed Carlton Trail Regional College board that was appointed in 2009 by the minister, is the minister aware of any overlap between the board that he appointed for Carlton Trail Regional College and that of the St. Peter's community?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We'll have to, we'll have to check that.

There'd be nothing to preclude some overlap and if I'm . . . and there'd be, there'd probably be at least one.

Mr. Broten: — In the interest of transparency, who is the one individual where there is overlap between the two institutions?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It's my understanding that it's Islay Ehlert.

Mr. Broten: — And in what role does Islay serve in St. Peter's College? Pardon me, what was the individual's name, Islay Ehlert?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — E-h-l-e-r-t.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — As far as we know, she would be a board member.

Mr. Broten: — A board member of St. Peter's College?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — And she's also a board member of Carlton Trail Regional College?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes. Nothing would preclude that.

Mr. Broten: — In the same way nothing would preclude the CEO being the same for both institutions.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That's exactly right.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. And once again, just for clarity in my own head, when was Islay appointed by you to the board?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — During 2009.

Mr. Broten: — June 2009.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — During. I can get the specific date.

Mr. Broten: — Pardon me?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I can get the specific date for you.

Mr. Broten: — June is okay.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — During is the word I used.

Mr. Broten: — During 2009?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — During 2009.

Mr. Broten: — That's fine. You were minister at the time, so that's enough. So when this individual was appointed to the board of Carlton Trail Regional College, was the minister aware that this individual was also on the board of St. Peter's College?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The time, we're just looking at the chronology there, and again we'll get back to you with specific dates. The reason for that is we'll determine the order of the appointments.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Yes I apologize. I cut the minister off earlier when he was going to provide the month in 2009. And I do ask for the minister's patience, and if you could provide the month in 2009, that would be good please.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure, we'll make sure the committee gets that as we dig it out. We just need to go back and locate the appropriate records.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. If . . . While an individual is going back to locate the appropriate records, if there is any other, any additional dual-serving board members of both, if that information could be discovered too. Would that be possible to have someone look into that please?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We will endeavour to get the information to the committee.

Mr. Broten: — In terms of earlier on in the evening when we were talking about the decision by what the minister described as a strategic partnership of two separate and unique institutions merging into one entity — or well I guess the minister coined it as strategic partnership — we see St. Peter's has perhaps a different understanding of this strategic partnership or a more developed understanding of this strategic partnership.

It was my understanding that the minister's rationale that this is something to explore was based on the fact that both boards and both governance structures were independent and autonomous structures making decisions independently to merge into one. Was that the basic, how I summed that up accurately in terms of what the minister has suggested is the justification, or not the justification, but the rationale for merging two into one?

[20:45]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well the rationale . . .

Mr. Broten: — Rationale was the wrong word there.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Was to find ways to maximize taxpayer dollars to ensure that there were enhanced learning opportunities for students across this region of our province, that is the east central region of Saskatchewan, to ensure that they were maximizing taxpayer dollars, finding synergies, and exploring options. That dialogue and discussion . . . Again the two entities have gone out, certainly have canvassed a range of stakeholders, but the due diligence from the ministry is just getting under way. And again, that list of stakeholders I've just read in . . . I would hope the members of the committee agree. When we start talking about the array of post-secondary

institutions, of which there will be 10; there will be Enterprise Saskatchewan offices of which there will be three; municipalities, there will be 62; towns and villages, there will be 48; industry partners, there will be 16; First Nations and Métis organizations, there will be five; and there will also be representatives from organized labour included in this as well as other community stakeholders. So that list is extensive.

Mr. Broten: — Well on a first hearing of it, it sounds like a fairly extensive list. But I would suggest if this newly merged couple is already pregnant, it doesn't really matter having a discussion, going around and talking to the family about whether or not you want to have kids if it's already . . . if the deal's a done one.

In terms of . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That would be a peculiar analogy.

Mr. Broten: — It is almost 9 o'clock. Looking at the board membership of Carlton Trail Regional College I see, as we identified earlier, Marlene Latreille of Earl Grey and Ron Bessey of Bladworth as two board members that had been appointed by this minister. A very basic Google search also shows that on the St. Peter's College senate announcement also listed as a senator for a region is western representative, Ron Bessey, and as a community-at-large representative, Marlene Latreille is also listed. Does that cross-pollination . . . is that news to the minister?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We were just . . . As far as the respective positions of these individuals, again I'll just confirm with the officials as far as what we have as far as information.

I'll probably ask for some clarification as far as connections between, if I've got this correct, the St. Peter's senate and board responsibilities. Maybe you can highlight for me the question again because obviously these are two distinct bodies within two distinct organizations.

Mr. Broten: — No, we've already established that there's a board member serving on both boards and we've also established that two of the board members serving on Carlton Trail Regional College are on the senate of St. Peter's College. So I understand the role of a senator is different from that of a board member. But I think it's probably pretty safe to assume that if one is a senator for an institution, the person is familiar with that institution and is involved in its governance in some way, as the name senator would suggest.

So my comment about the individuals and the fact that there are dual-serving, or people serving dual roles here, again in the same way, this whole line of questioning is not about the integrity of St. Peter's College as an institution. And in the same way this line of questioning is not in any way questioning the ability of these individuals that are serving on either board.

But I do know, I would assume that just as MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] serving in this Assembly, we have to file a Conflict of Interest Commissioner report in terms of boards that we belong to, organizations that we have an involvement with, I think it's a wise thing when choosing board members for an institution, when possible, to set up the

institution and the structure in such a way that people are able to set them up for success, have the structure in place that people can excel in what they're doing, and really defend the interests and the mission of that institution.

So it's just curious or it's . . . I know I think it would be challenging for many people to be serving in dual roles and be serving the unique mandates of each organization.

The Chair: — Mr. Minister, if I could interrupt for a moment. Ms. Schriemer.

Ms. Schriemer: — I'm just wondering if Mr. Broten could table that so we could all have a copy and we're able to reference it as you read it.

Mr. Broten: — Oh, gladly.

Ms. Schriemer: — Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I'm happy to respond, Mr. Chair, and that is in communities across Saskatchewan there are individuals — and it goes to the voluntary and volunteer spirit of the province — there are individuals across our communities that serve on multiple boards. They volunteer for a variety of organizations. They roll their sleeves up to help in the best way that they can and, you know, this is kind of the nature of Saskatchewan.

So do I see an obvious conflict here? If that's the nature of the question, then the answer is, I don't necessarily see that. And I would like to correct for the record, I've just been informed that in fact Islay Ehlert is not on St. Peter's. The information I had was incomplete and so just to clarify that point.

Mr. Broten: — Was it . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — But I am happy to report that on January 14th, she was appointed to the Carlton Trail board.

Mr. Broten: — Had Islay served on the board of St. Peter's College in the past?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, I don't know. We'll have to track that down.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. What was the reason that Islay — I gave away my papers to be photocopied — Islay Ehlert, what was the reason that the minister provided her name then?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I was handed a piece of paper that made reference to her. It was my mistake.

Mr. Broten: — Why was the ministry, the official under the impression that Islay was a member of the board?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It was my own mistake. I was handed a piece of paper and I made that mistake.

Mr. Broten: — Okay, thank you. Is it the minister's goal to have the two separate entities merged into one?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Oh, you know again, I'm open-minded about that continuum. What we want to do is we want to make

sure we're helping to foster and facilitate enhanced offerings for learners across the province. One way to do that is to increase funding for post-secondary education. Our track record is rock solid in this matter.

The other is to make sure that we're maximizing dollars. From the grassroots, as these institutions . . . and I go back to this notion, this new partnership from last July. As the institutions have explored what that partnership looks like, I keep an open mind about the final form of that partnership. That being said, as certainly we are undertaking, the institutions have gone through their own respective processes and we're now just beginning ours. And it's going to include and entail extensive consultations across multiple sectors.

The Chair: — Mr. Broten, if I can interrupt, I think we'll take a five-minute break. So we'll recess for five minutes and return promptly in five minutes.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — Welcome back, committee members. Before we begin, as we come out of recess, we'll table the last document provided by Mr. Broten. Human Services document HUS 57/26, St. Peter's College senate announcement. And, Mr. Broten, you still have the floor.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Is the minister aware that he is on the senate of St. Peter's College?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Within the purview of a minister, I am named to a variety of senates and other bodies as well in an ex officio capacity.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. What is the other specific — and if you don't have it right now, ballpark — figure for the value of the assets under the control of the board of Carlton Trail Regional College?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The question's a complex one. You know, the annual allocation for budget is 7.7 million, just about 8 million, but the actual asset base we would have to break down. Because as new dollars have been invested from both the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour as well as the Ministry of Education into the new educational facility, as well as other potential assets . . . I mean, we can get that. We can get a ballpark figure to the member, but that's not going to be probably tonight, Mr. Chair. That'll be in the due course of the committee procedure.

Mr. Broten: — Yes, if that can be provided tomorrow, that would be great. Thank you.

So if a merger occurs . . . And the St. Peter's College traditionally has been held accountable to the minister. The minister is responsible for things that go on in the regional college system. Pardon me, Carlton Trail Regional College. St. Peter's College has had a different structure and a different authority above them.

If a merger occurred into one unique entity, what assurances would there be that public assets would still have the . . . or what had at one time been public assets would still be under the

authority and oversight of the minister?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I think what's important here is the very premise of the member's question, and that is the word if. And so as we're going through our deliberations and the consultations with a variety of stakeholders, there will be a range of questions and certainly the allocation of assets would be a natural question. So at this stage, again, as the ministry is just beginning to undertake its work, those are the questions that, those are the types of questions that certainly we'll endeavour to confirm with the parties, what potential intentions they have.

Again for our processes within the ministry, regardless of the aspirations of the institutions, we approach this with an open mind, but our due diligence is just getting started.

Mr. Broten: — So this question of if as you put it, Mr. Minister, interesting going back to the column in the newsletter. It said, on page 10 of the newsletter which was the winter-spring edition, so out for a while, it said, "The provincial government is encouraging the merger, and the legislation is expected to be in place this fall to confirm the merger."

Is there legislation drafted on a potential merger at St. Peter's College and Carlton Trail Regional College?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No, there isn't.

Mr. Broten: — How is it that the leadership of St. Peter's College believes that legislation will be coming in the fall?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Any discussion of potential legislation or legislative amendment would be part of our due diligence, and that work has not commenced. And again we're going out for consultation. So again I would probably ascribe the words as aspirational, and certainly we don't want to detract from that kind of enthusiasm. But it's not going to detract from our own due diligence.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Well this is a pretty specific item in a published newsletter, it says, "The provincial government is encouraging the merger, and the legislation is expected to be in place this fall to confirm the merger."

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well the member knows the legislative cycle within the Assembly. And that is the general course, as I've come to learn about, it is that amendments or legislation often proposed in the fall and after deliberations through the House passed in the spring.

And so again, I can't speak to the author. I don't know who wrote that. I can simply ascribe to it an aspirational piece. And we're just beginning our due diligence and our due process. And as we go along and hear from stakeholders if and as required that there are legislative amendments or changes or new legislation is needed, then that would be undertaken in the due course of the Assembly.

[21:15]

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Chair, there's been a great amount of work, it would appear, that's been done by St. Peter's College in

pursuing the merger into a single institution with Carlton Trail Regional College. Moving administrative space from one building to another has been talked about. Developing a senate that would be appropriate has been accomplished, and the minister is on that senate. At least discussions of legislation that needs to take place in order for it to occur as indicated by their own newsletter. Discussion of a joint syllabus for the fall session of school, which is considerable work as well.

If it's not the minister's wish for the merger into one institution to occur, why is he allowing all of this work? And why is he allowing the members of the St. Peter's College community to pursue all this work, governance-wise and in a concrete sense as well in terms of moving spaces and talk of that? Why is all of this work occurring if it's not going to happen?

If it is such a huge if, as the minister suggests, would the minister think it's a decent idea to call up St. Peter's and say, let's . . . we have to do this thing called consultation and I don't want you to do all this work when we're still consulting with the community. Maybe we shouldn't put the cart before the horse. Would that be a wise conversation? Or is it the minister's position that we want to do it, it's going to happen, and get things lined up?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, I think we've had the discussion as far as making sure that all parties understand that we'll be undertaking our own due diligence. And we take that very seriously, and at the same time, you know, I remain open-minded to what that partnership looks like.

And there again I'll go back to right where I started. There would be a continuum and where the parties end on that continuum, certainly St. Peter's has offered its expressed preference, and certainly I respect those aspirations. As we hear from stakeholders and a variety of other entities, we'll take these aspirations into mind. But certainly we've made it crystal clear that we'll be undertaking our own due diligence.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. There are other educational institutions around the province like St. Peter's in the sense that they have a relationship with the University of Saskatchewan in terms of programs — Briercrest Bible College, or Briercrest College, or Horizon in Saskatoon which was Central Pentecostal College. The decision or the actions that we're having around the pursuit of a merged situation between St. Peter's and Carlton Trail Regional College, what message would the minister like to send to other institutions, like the ones I stated for example, with respect to mergers with public institutions like Carlton Trail Regional College.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I think the message has been clear. And one of the most poignant examples would be the creation of the Great Plains College, and that is this government certainly is open to initiatives from grassroots communities to find ways to maximize public dollars, enhance the learning experience.

In fact I was recently in a conversation with another CEO who asked about that and said, is there pressure in that direction? And I said, no there wouldn't be pressure in that. We offer that as one example to help illustrate that if and as entities are interested, then they should look at ways to help ensure that

we're maximizing dollars.

And I'll give a couple of examples. The folks at Lakeland are working with the folks over at the Parkland Regional College to cross the province. They offer a pretty important program regarding training for firefighters. And the Parkland initiative runs out of Melville, and what it does is have students in the Vermilion campus been able to get out there and do a tour of that. There would be an example. Lakeland as well is, they're just undertaking some initial exploration on Northlands on an environmental program which I think holds some considerable promise. So those are a couple of examples.

And certainly the message that we have is, as we enter this year, now a good portion over, this year will be a review of regional colleges. And certainly we want to make sure that we're looking at the effectiveness and efficiency of regional colleges. But that being said, we have every confidence within our regional college structure, hence my comments. And I reiterate those, just how irresponsible this SGEU press release was regarding "privatization of public post-secondary education in Saskatchewan." That's a quote.

Our track record's solid. Our investment's \$1.6 billion, and certainly we have confidence in the regional college system.

Your question about specific colleges, you know, what we're going to try to do is make sure that we're attentive to grassroots communities across Saskatchewan, and if and as they have ideas, we want to hear those ideas. We want to make sure that we're attentive to them and at the same time that we undertake our own due diligence, again ensuring that we're maximizing public dollars and helping to enhance the student experience.

Mr. Broten: — What were the institutions that merged to form Great Plains College?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Prairie West and Cypress Hills.

Mr. Broten: — And did both of those institutions fall under the authority of *The Regional Colleges Act*?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, they did.

Mr. Broten: — Does St. Peter's College fall under the authority of *The Regional Colleges Act*?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No, as we've discussed, it would fall under both the St. Peter's Act and the post-secondary education and training Act.

Mr. Broten: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It's a little different. And certainly, you know, during the deliberations that the ministry has been involved in, you know, we've made sure that the entities have understood that.

Mr. Broten: — But the type of oversight and the type of accountability that occurs through *The Regional Colleges Act* is not the same as, the same form, for example the legislation that allows St. Peter's College to exist. Correct?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It would be a different form, but certainly the umbrella of the post-secondary education and training Act is . . . There are extensive authorities placed within that Act.

Mr. Broten: — Am I correct that in the legislation that's in place that allows St. Peter's College to exist, it allows for a degree of autonomy with respect to its faith roots and a different governance structure?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, I think that's a fair assessment.

Mr. Broten: — What are the types of diplomas and certificates that St. Peter's is able to provide? What is the nature of those types of certifications?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — There is some evolution here, I know, as I get into this. Through St. Peter's there's an offering of first and second year university courses in arts and science, business, kinesiology, and agriculture. There's also an affiliation with nursing, if I'm not mistaken, Reg, and there's also an international business program that is starting in the fall. That's probably connected to the business program, but it probably has its own distinctions. The Carlton Trail Regional College delivers credit, and so those would be, the category would be credit.

Mr. Broten: — What diplomas or certificates does that training lead to?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Those are towards — and we can break down, again almost down to an individual subject level if you want — these are for, towards degrees, and that is first and second year university courses. Carlton Trail Regional College delivers credit and non-credit programs and courses in areas covering adult basic education, technical vocational training, university programming, and other development courses.

Mr. Broten: — I asked the question, what message the minister wants to send to institutions in a similar boat or circumstance as St. Peter's College. The flip side, the other side of the coin is what message he wants to have sent to regional colleges with respect to the relationship between strictly public institutions and those which have a degree of private institution to them based on unique legislation, legislation that is outside of *The Regional Colleges Act*?

Based on, at least in my view and perhaps some people watching at home, based on the amount of activity we've seen in this situation between St. Peter's College and Carlton Trail Regional College, the fairly significant shifts that we're seeing potentially with this merged entity and the great amount of work that has been done — which to me would indicate that it's more than a nascent idea between a few people or a few boards, even if there is significant overlap between the boards — what message is the minister sending to regional colleges? If there's a regional college that wants to partner with Briercrest for example, is that encouraged? And can they expect to have a new merged board that is shared and is under what is proposed in this call for applications for directors on a board?

[21:30]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I think, importantly, we've set out a

framework for post-secondary education in the province that focuses on excellence, on innovation, on inclusion which allows us to put great emphasis on affordability, accessibility, and equity, as well as a key component and that is effectiveness. And from there, to be able to extrapolate to say responsiveness, and most especially making sure that there's alignment with labour market opportunities. That's certainly an emphasis.

It's not in any way to detract from the intrinsic value of post-secondary education and skills training and personal and professional development that are offered through the range of post-secondary institutions that we have in the province. That message has been clear and consistent over the course of a couple of years now.

As far as the message to regional colleges and to other entities, it is, we think that grassroots communities, rural communities in Saskatchewan ought to have a say and be able to provide ideas for the fate and future, scope and scale of post-secondary education.

And I'll use an example from Estevan. And, you know, what we saw was an institution down in the Southeast that was very keen to play a much larger role in energy, and the community got behind this. And certainly we were attentive to it, and the federal government became very engaged in this. The provincial government didn't say, you ought to be engaged more in energy. This grew out of the natural economic drivers. It grew out of the commitment from the community to the institution. And there was a really wonderful combination that came together; again another success because of the knowledge infrastructure program.

We now see the beginnings of an energy institute down in the Southeast. And we've had the opportunity, I've had the opportunity with my colleague or our caucus Chair to go out there two or three times now. There is an example of . . . And that's one of the largest investments in a regional college in the history of this province, and it was the alignment of grassroots community; the post-secondary educational institution, Southeast Regional College; the provincial government saying, we're open to this idea; and the federal government coming onside.

And I think the message is clear. It's yet another example of a government that says, certainly we're going to go through our due diligence, but we're going to be respectful and in fact open to ideas to enhance skills training and education, personal and professional development within the province. And the fact that we are able to move forward on that initiative I think reflects that commitment to communities that, for too long frankly, were ignored by the former government. And I'm pleased that we're making progress there.

As far as what this means for . . . And certainly we're going through the minutia of St. Peter's and Carlton Trail and that's fine; happy to do that. The point here is from a grassroots level, from the community, a request to look at — and again I'll go back to Professor Kobussen — a new partnership last July. And where we are today, obviously aspirationally, with pretty significant endorsement from St. Peter's, we can see that it's time now for the government to undertake its due diligence. We're positioned to do that.

Our consultations are going to be extensive. And do I have an open mind about this? Yes, I do. And do I appreciate the work that's gone into this from grassroots communities? Yes, I do because it demonstrates an ownership from those communities. Certainly are there issues that are unique to a potential partnership regardless of its shape? There may well be, and that's why we're going to get out and talk to a range of stakeholders.

But you know, I actually applaud the initiative of the communities and the institutions to imagine for themselves a new future, a brighter future. And we're going to undertake our due diligence and approach our work with an open mind. And you know, if the official opposition doesn't want to do that, then I guess that's the role of the official opposition.

Mr. Broten: — I hear the minister, and on some points I actually agree with the minister on some points. I would state though, as I draw this line of questioning to a close soon, mergers between colleges within the regional college system, that's one discussion. Mergers with colleges outside of the regional college system, that's a different kettle of fish. And that's a debate that probably, you know, we need to have as a legislature, as a society. I think that's a fine debate to have, but it is a debate that I think the merits of and the drawbacks and the pitfalls, whatever they may be — the benefits — it's a debate that should occur in the public and in an open and in a transparent manner.

And to me, just seeing the inconsistency in the stories between those on the ground working on the merger, and then the very guarded language coming from the minister, to me there is not an alignment there. And so that's why I felt it was appropriate to spend some time on this topic, and I appreciate the conversation.

My closing . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — If I could, Mr. Chair, on that point, I think what's important is, as we've said, the issue of legislative change. And somehow the member slips this in, that there's something going on that isn't transparent here.

If and as legislative change is required, that would occur obviously in our Assembly. It would occur in open and full deliberations where any number of questions, I would anticipate and welcome actually. I think the member is right. I think there may be many points of convergence, but at this point, the fact that we have some keen and certainly well-intended individuals doesn't detract from the due diligence that's going to be undertaken.

And certainly the promise I make is that deliberation on the future shape, substance of that institution will be done through open dialogue and informed by a range of stakeholders. And certainly we've seen some voice their opinion already, in fact that's how I started out by saying, here's a release, hardly news because last July 10th there was talk of a new partnership evolving. So happy to have that as we go along.

Mr. Broten: — WEPA [Western Economic Partnership Agreement], chiropractors, SCN [Saskatchewan Communications Network], educational assistants, many

examples why people in Saskatchewan have some serious concerns about the transparency of operations of this government. Many examples why many people question timelines and question stories, especially when there are two stories which are so different, two stories which have so many inconsistencies, and two stories that really tell different stories. They're not the same; something's not lining up. Something is raising a significant number of flags for a lot of people, and that is the rationale for the questioning.

Last question on this issue. The minister is certain, absolutely certain that there is no legislation drafted on this issue?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No, there's no legislation drafted on this.

Mr. Broten: — Any legislation in progress on this issue, not in final form ready to be presented to the House?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — To the very best of my ability I can offer the assurance that I am unaware of any work that's been done regarding legislative changes.

Mr. Broten: — So our discussion, we have dealt with some fairly specific issues, but we have addressed larger issues about the regional college system. And I would now like to move into some questions on that topic. Is it the expected practice of the ministry for regional colleges to participate in audits done by the Provincial Auditor?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Two issues here. One regarding the authority of the Provincial Auditor, and the Provincial Auditor certainly has the authority to do that. The second issue relates to past practice or ongoing practice, and that would be a rotational basis for colleges.

Mr. Broten: — On the rotational basis, what is the rotation? How often do they participate in the audit cycle?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That's at the choice of the Provincial Auditor.

Mr. Broten: — So is the practice that the auditor approaches the regional colleges and asks to audit the books?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The colleges would have their own respective auditors and then from there the Provincial Auditor. Certainly I'm not going to pretend to speak on behalf of the Provincial Auditor. I'll just speak on practices that from there the Provincial Auditor will undertake actions as deemed warranted.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So there's no standard by the ministry with respect to how often audits should occur in regional colleges?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I don't know if the member wants to rephrase that question. It made it sound rather kind of nonchalant. And I don't think that was the, I don't think that was probably the intent of the question. The respective institutions have their books audited every year, and they do that with their respective auditors. And the role of the Provincial Auditor then moves forward based on decision and discretion of the auditor.

Mr. Broten: — So in the year ending 2009, which regional colleges participated in the Provincial Auditor's audit and which did not?

[21:45]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The Provincial Auditor undertook audits of three of the seven regional colleges — Cumberland, Great Plains, and North West.

Mr. Broten: — So the ones that were not audited, they'll be part of another audit cycle in the following year or in the future?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I want to be really clear here. The regional colleges are audited. Your question relates to the work of the Provincial Auditor, and as we've said, that's a rotational basis and undertaken at the discretion of the Provincial Auditor. I wouldn't pretend to speak for the Provincial Auditor.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Could the minister please state the amount of funding in this budget that is provided to each of the regional colleges, broken down by institution, please?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We'll just go through and offer totals for both operations and programming. And there may be some other questions, obviously, about capital and we're happy to take those.

So for Carlton Trail Regional College for the '10-11 budget, total operating and program funds, \$3,463,789. For Northlands we have total operating and program funding, '10-11 budget, \$11,327,179. North West, we've got \$7,358,099. For Lakeland, which falls outside of *The Regional Colleges Act* but still serves a vital purpose for us, just over 1 million — \$1,039,328. For Cumberland, again '09-10, total operating and program funding, \$3,941,591. For '10-11 for Great Plains, \$6,745,824. For Parkland, \$5,179,379 and Southeast, \$4,889,721. Again, that was both operating and program funding.

Mr. Broten: — Excluding capital.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That's right.

Mr. Broten: — For each of the institutions that you listed, Mr. Minister, does that represent an increase or a decrease from last year?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — For the Southeast that's a decrease. For Parkland it's a decrease. For Great Plains a decrease. Cumberland a decrease. For Lakeland a decrease. For North West a decrease. For Northlands that's an increase, and for Carlton Trail it's a decrease. Most of them slight.

The operating dollars, if I've got this right, the operating dollars went up and some of the program dollars dropped. And we can break this down. What we had were program dollars decrease and operating figures increase. And again, we can go down into some specific detail on those. On average . . . So I'll just give you a snapshot of the increases on the operating grant. For Carlton Trail, 5.3 per cent increase. Cumberland regional college, 4.9 per cent increase. Great Plains, 5 per cent increase. For Northlands, 1.1 per cent. North West, 2.2 . . .

Mr. Broten: — Sorry, 1.1?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, 1.1 per cent. North West Regional College is 2.2. Parkland regional college, 2.9. Southeast Regional College is 3.9, for an average increase of 4.7.

Mr. Broten: — And the other column for the per cent changes, please.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. What was that?

Mr. Broten: — So the per cent changes there, that was for operating?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That's right. Increases on operating.

Mr. Broten: — Pardon me?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Increases on operating.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. And you stated all those are increases? All those percentages you gave?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes they were.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. And so then on the programming side, what are the changes please?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. Mr. Chair, a couple options for committee members. We can go through this. There are some . . . There would be numbers that are disaggregated at this point and we can go back and actually aggregate them, and from that aggregate we'd be able to provide percentages. Or we can go through this disaggregated data and it'll just take a little longer. Whatever the member wants. Because the program . . . The rationale for this is, there are different streams of programming and so it'll just take us . . . So we've got Quick Skills and then we have another skills category, then we have adult basic education. We can provide you with those tonight or we can actually go back and put them into a more concise form. I'm happy to undertake whatever the member would like.

Mr. Broten: — Does it currently exist in a document that could be tabled, or not so much?

[22:00]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — What we're happy to do is tomorrow table a document that's concise. Again because it draws on three programmatic areas, those aren't consolidated into one document. So we're happy to, we're happy to provide . . . As I say, I'm happy to read them right now or I'm happy to table tomorrow an aggregate with percentages. And that way it probably make for . . . Well, I mean, it's up to the members. I just don't want to . . . It'll take . . .

Mr. Broten: — Yes I appreciate that and a document tomorrow would be great. I know some of the institutions, speaking to individuals, are just . . . Clearly, what is each institution receiving would be helpful for many people.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. No, happy to do that.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So for seven out of the eight, we see a decrease in the amount of funding being provided when it comes to operations and programming.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — And this is where it's important. The numbers that I offered you as percentages, and again we'll include the . . . both percentage and the raw data tomorrow. What we see is actually increases that were provided to the colleges on operating, and in some of the program areas, there are decreases.

Mr. Broten: — Okay.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — But not all of them.

Mr. Broten: — So the total amounts that you gave me for operating and programming, would that include funding that was received by some institutions through labour market agreements?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes. Yes it would.

Mr. Broten: — So the numbers you provided me for the total for operations and programming, that would be total funds. There's no . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Those are consolidated with the exception of capital, yes.

Mr. Broten: — Okay, thank you very much. Moving on to SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] for a bit, the March 30th *Leader-Post* reported that, quote, "In an email sent Friday, McCulloch said funding from the province is reduced and SIAST is facing a shortfall of several million dollars in operating and capital resources."

What was the rationale for shortchanging SIAST by several million dollars?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. Regarding SIAST, again as we look at a range of, as a range of investments, SIAST received \$872,400 increase to offset increased salary costs. SIAST received an additional \$561,000 for nursing expansion. SIAST received an extra \$125,000 for the Woodland Campus and an expansion there. There were increases in both operating and program funding. That being said, the reduction came with the elimination of TEL [technology enhanced learning] funding, and that helps to provide an overview of the SIAST funds.

Mr. Broten: — So would the minister agree with Dr. McCulloch that there was a shortfall in funding for SIAST?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, I think the decision to phase out the TEL funding, it's a program that's been in place for — Reg, if I'm not mistaken, 15 years? — it's been in place for 15 years. The feedback that we've received from various institutions is that the technology piece is now ubiquitous on the campuses. And it was probably appropriate to phase that out. We're certainly cognizant.

This has caused perhaps some transitional issues for SIAST and so we're working with SIAST. Would I agree with Dr.

McCulloch? You know I think in a constrained budget, we're pleased that we were able to do and offer the types of investments that we did across the post-secondary piece, and at the same time we undertook what we thought were prudent and responsible decisions. And the TEL funding certainly fits within that framework.

Mr. Broten: — Just very briefly, could the minister please describe the nature of the TEL funding, how much it was and what it did exactly?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. It was just over \$5.5 million annually for the technology enhanced learning and you know, what we can talk about is, originally set up to help foster, facilitate increased . . . really I guess at its root, enhanced online learning and use of electronic infrastructure. After 15 years, certainly in my tours of the regional colleges and SIAST, this is ubiquitous. The universities also benefited from the TEL funding but the response has been again largely that . . . probably time for a new direction. It's no longer about building that capacity. And again, that was part of our decision making.

Mr. Broten: — The 5.5, is that exclusively a cut to SIAST? Or the minister in his answer mentioned regional colleges as well, so that's affecting a number of institutions I understand?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That's exactly right. I'll just give you the breakdown of what that looks like. For SIAST, that's \$1,024,000 and I'll just, I'll round it there. If you want additional details, for the University of Regina, \$980,000 thereabouts; the University of Saskatchewan, \$1,130,000 thereabouts; for Great Plains, about 280,000; for Parkland, 150,000; Southeast, 150,000; Carlton Trail, 146,000 thereabouts; North West, 146,000; Cumberland, 140,000; Northlands, 140,000.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. The quote in the *Leader-Post*, March 30th says, "In an email sent Friday, McCulloch said funding from the province is reduced and SIAST is facing a shortfall of several million dollars in operating and capital resources."

So the minister mentioned \$1,024,000 to do with the one area of funding. Dr. McCulloch is on record saying several million dollars in operating and capital resources. So the difference there from several million to 1 million, what are the missing millions that Dr. McCulloch is referring to?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well they're . . . and I believe my comments in that article were related to, perhaps Dr. McCulloch was a little premature in offering that conclusion, but as you've stated in your comments, that these relate to capital. And so there was a reduction of 1.2 million in capital for SIAST.

Mr. Broten: — So the reductions for SIAST are the 1,024,000 on the front of the TEL funding and then the 1.24 million with respect to capital? Is that the total of funding reductions for SIAST, those two categories?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — And we had again some of the program funding, and we can come back to that, but for about 180,000. And that would give you a snapshot of the areas where savings were found.

Mr. Broten: — So the cuts occurred in three areas: TEL funding, a million point two four in capital, and just under \$200,000 in programming. Is that the extent of the cuts those three areas?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Those are the principal areas. Again the offset that I've read into the record, we were able to provide more than 870,000 offset salary costs and an additional 560,000 more than that for nurse training expansion, 125,000 to the Woodland campus for an expansion there, and then the offsets as you've listed them.

Mr. Broten: — So the three areas — the \$1.024 million for TEL funding, the 1.24 million for capital funding, the 189,000 or so for program funding — the minister said those are the principal areas. My question, are those the principal areas or the only areas? Are there additional areas where cuts occurred?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — To be clear, I've offered . . . We've been talking about programming, capital, and then the TEL. And as I've offered them, those remarks are the, those remarks appear to be the list of savings.

Mr. Broten: — So the three areas of cuts, is that it? Or are there cuts in other places that aren't being stated at this time? Is it just those three areas where the cuts are occurring?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, those are the areas.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Thanks. When a budgetary constraint or reduction is made and SIAST has to respond accordingly because of the amount of funding that is provided for programming, how does SIAST decide which programs to cut?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The board goes through its own deliberations based on its business case.

Mr. Broten: — So we talked about in the Assembly certain programs that were cut. How was the business case formulated with respect to which programs are cut and which are not? What mechanism does the board use to determine what is cut and what is not?

[22:15]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Certainly I'm not going to, again, speak on behalf of the board, but some of the broad questions would relate to enrolment patterns. Some would relate to efficiencies or duplication. Others would relate to labour market demand, that is, employment opportunities, as well certainly hearing from employers on the demand side specifically and also taking into consideration historical patterns.

Mr. Broten: — Historical patterns meaning . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I'll just, I'll offer an example if I may. There was an automotive service technician certificate program. The seats were reduced by 12; there are 24 existing. The program historically struggles to be filled at 36, and so a decision was made to say based on historical patterns.

Again it goes back to, I guess, the broader enrolment piece. There's one example where they said, okay, here's a business

decision that makes sense for SIAST on a go-forward basis — still offering the program, just reducing the number of seats because of historic trend lines on enrolment.

Mr. Broten: — Is the same evaluation criteria or matrix used for evaluating every program? Are all programs judged by the same criteria?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — This is a, you know, obviously again a post-secondary board decision and discussion. What I have offered are some snapshots of some questions. The board deliberations are those of the board.

I think importantly what we've seen from SIAST over the course of a number of years . . . If I remember a conversation with Dr. McCullough, when he came in there were more than 200 programs and now somewhere in the range of between 150 and 160. And so this is a constant evaluation, and we certainly leave that kind of evaluation to the board. We do our own due diligence as far as follow-up, but the board's decisions are respected, and their deliberations are consistent again with the success of SIAST in the past.

Mr. Broten: — Is geography or the availability of programming at a regional level outside of Saskatoon and Regina, is that an aspect considered when making decisions on funding cuts? Excuse me, not funding cuts, program cuts?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The role of geography would fit within the category offered as far as labour market demand. And that would depend again on programs. Obviously there are some offered in Moose Jaw, and have been for years, where individuals, let's say, from the P.A. [Prince Albert] campus need to come to Moose Jaw to finish their programs. But the broad question as answered, again, board decision, but one that certainly takes geography into consideration within the broader context of labour market attachment.

Mr. Broten: — So it's geography in the sense of needs and area, not necessarily where training is provided.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It could be, except in those cases where the program actually continues on at a different campus. Obviously then it would be outside of the purview of specific regions.

Mr. Broten: — As the minister will recall, we discussed this somewhat in question period, and in response to one of the questions the minister said, “. . . the member opposite knows well there is another initiative on the P.A. campus pertaining to child care training, Mr. Speaker. We certainly know that.” What initiative was the minister referring to? Was it the . . . It's my understanding, if my memory serves me correctly, the diploma program was cut. The certificate program remained. Was the certificate program the other initiative the minister was referring to, or is it something different that we don't know about?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, it's the certificate program.

Mr. Broten: — So if someone wants training beyond the certificate program, if they want to receive the diploma, they would go to what centre to pursue that training?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Either Saskatoon or Regina. But we found, again, with the labour market in mind, was most students go right to work after the certificate program. There are 32 seats in that one-year certificate program, and they're still offered in Prince Albert.

Mr. Broten: — One of the programs cut was the applied photography program. An article in the *Moosomin Spectator* said that the Sask Party government is "... in effect telling young people if they want to study photography, they can leave this province." When there is a program that is unique and only offered in ... or it's the only program that is offered in the province, is there value to retaining that program in the province?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Certainly there are discussions under way to look at some potential options. There is a — if I've got this correct — there's a photography program at one of the private colleges. And so it's not to say that that's the equivalent. Certainly the feedback we've received is that this was distinctive. The challenge here related to an uneven employment record.

Mr. Broten: — At which private college is it provided through?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We'll track that information down. I was just talking to some industry stakeholders who said this was available though, in their opinion, didn't provide the same level of instruction. But we'll track that down for you.

Mr. Broten: — So a program but not of the same calibre as the existing program.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — That's right.

Mr. Broten: — Any idea on the cost difference as well for students?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — No, I don't have that.

Mr. Broten: — Right now you don't know what institute that it is being offered through?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It was a conversation with some industry leaders. And we'll go back and track that down, and we'll be able to provide it for you.

Mr. Broten: — But it's a program in Saskatchewan you believe?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, it is.

Mr. Broten: — In Saskatoon or Regina?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well I won't even speculate. The conversation was on a conference call. And I'll just go back and we'll check our records.

Mr. Broten: — The expression you used, I believe it was, an uneven employment record. Was that it? How is the employment record information obtained?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — SIAST is pretty rigorous in the graduate survey process.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Well I know when speaking to some of the students involved in the program, to me they raised some serious concerns with the ... to use one of the minister's words, how robust the process is for obtaining the information through the exit surveys. I know the view that was expressed to me was that, as it is sometimes in life, the squeaky wheel does attract a bit more attention. And I know in speaking with some of the students, what they expressed to me was that, individuals, they expressed to me that there was great ... they felt there were great prospects in terms of employment here in the province. And the individuals that could be doing, the individuals that were doing quite well, were established, had either started their own businesses or employed through a business, might not necessarily take the time to fill out the information being sought with respect to how well they're doing.

And then there could be circumstances where individuals may not have a successful experience which, as with any program there's a degree of that, I would expect. Not everyone excels to the same level. And some of those people could be providing the information. So on this specific decision to eliminate the applied photography program, any sense on how many surveys were used in making the decision that there was an uneven employment record?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I don't have access to those, but again, over the course of tomorrow, we can attempt to contact SIAST and get some data.

Mr. Broten: — Okay, thank you very much. That'd be great. Could it be tabled later with the committee?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. Assuming that we can get that from SIAST, we're happy to table it.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Moving on to adult basic education. We've had discussion in past committee meetings about ABE [adult basic education]. I know time is marching on this evening, but what has happened in this budget to address wait lists for adult basic education?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well first and foremost we've enhanced dollars, investment in adult basic education, and that's by almost \$2 million. And so the additional dollars are being directed towards level 1 and level 2 learners. That relates to essential skills for the workplace. The emphasis here is being put on the transition to the workplaces as quickly as possible. I mean we've got ... What we have is an RFP [request for proposal] that's been sent out to community-based organizations, post-secondary institutions, and school divisions with community schools, and that occurred at the end of April. And we think this is a pretty significant additional investment to help address those wait times. We'll see as a result of the RFP process the specific proposals that come in.

Mr. Broten: — Has there been, in general terms, any major changes with respect to the institutions that are providing adult basic education? Is it mostly the same institutions doing the work that has been done or has there been a reallocation of funding in some way?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Essentially the same, but the RFP holds the opportunity and I just want to, you know, put that in broad terms again. That's still under consideration, holds the opportunity of broadening that out.

[22:30]

Mr. Broten: — Broadened it out in what way?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Depending on which organizations send in the responses, the request for proposals, or respond to the request for proposals, will as I say . . . I don't want to in any way curtail opportunity. So, I mean, we'll see how those proposals come in. And as I reiterate, it holds the potential of broadening that out.

Mr. Broten: — Can the minister provide a list please of the institutions that currently provide adult basic education training?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes we can certainly do that. We can do that either . . . Carlton Trail Regional College, Cumberland regional college, Great Plains College, Lakeland College, North West Regional College, Northlands College, Parkland Regional College, Southeast Regional College, SIAST Kelsey Institute, SIAST Palliser institute, SIAST Wascana institute, SIAST Woodland institute, the Dumont Technical Institute, and the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology.

Mr. Broten: — Are those the organizations that . . . regional colleges, SIAST, Gabriel Dumont, and SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology], those are the traditional . . .

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Dumont Technical Institute.

Mr. Broten: — Sorry, Dumont Technical Institute.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes and with . . . If I may, sorry to interrupt, with the . . . out beyond the regional colleges, Lakeland College is included in that.

Mr. Broten: — So those are the institutions that have traditionally provided ABE training?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — So this request for proposals, when you say it could widen the group, so it widens it beyond the list that you just provided perhaps?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — It's premature for us to respond to that. We've just sent out the RFP at the end of April, so I mean all I offer is that we won't preclude new entrants, but at the same time won't make a judgment about these that have undertaken the work in the past.

Mr. Broten: — So the broadening out, what are the basic parameters of the request for proposals? Does it include private institutions?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — What we could see is — and again I'll be careful here because we don't want to, we don't want to undermine the RFP process — we could see, for example,

partners with these institutions.

Mr. Broten: — Partners that currently exist or partnerships that would be formed?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — New partnerships.

Mr. Broten: — Like St. Peter's College and Carlton Trail Regional College?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well, I mean, maybe like a tribal council.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Could it include school boards, existing K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] school boards?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The school boards are offered funding through the education system, as I understand it, for those individuals that are between the ages of — is it 18, Reg? — 18 and 22 and so that would be the, that would be the most likely avenue. There again I don't want to prejudice or in any way undermine the RFP process. If a group or a couple of partners have come up with an innovative approach or project, we'll have a look at that.

Mr. Broten: — Could it include a private for-profit educational institution?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, it's not to . . . again, I don't want to in any way preclude, I don't want to, sorry, I don't want to preclude those potential partnerships. The RFP has gone out. I'll phrase it like this. I really don't want to spoil . . . given the significance of the dollars, \$2 million increased in adult basic education . . . and we know how important literacy is. We were just at the READ 'n' Feed event for READ Saskatoon. We just know the significance of this. I don't want to spoil the RFP process. So I'm not being . . . I'm trying to be cautious here.

One of the criteria is that there would be a partnership with a publicly funded post-secondary institution in the province. Where the partnership goes on the other side, that's open, and in fact we want to encourage innovation to help ensure that we can reach more of those learners across the province that are in need of this.

Mr. Broten: — Closing question, Mr. Chair. When is the RFP process completed and when will announcements be made?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The RFP process as I recall it, Reg, it's somewhere around the 25th, 26th? The 25th and we anticipate . . .

Mr. Broten: — Of this month?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, sorry, of this month, for . . . to hear back, receive proposals back in. And my sense is that we would, we'd be in a position to roll those out, we anticipate, before the end of June. Probably taking two and a half, three and a half weeks to undertake our own assessment.

Mr. Broten: — All right. Well thank you. I'm told the buzzer has gone and that concludes our time for tonight, so I want to thank the minister and all of the many officials for the answers this evening. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Chair, if I could, I'd echo especially a special thanks for the officials from the ministry, from the Apprenticeship Commission — I see Joe Black is still with us; he's been very patient — as well as those working here in the legislature. They help to ensure that we're able to do our jobs, so share in that.

The Chair: — I'd also like to echo the thanks of the minister to committee members and all the officials that attended tonight and also the employees of the Legislative Assembly, the Clerks and Hansard. Very appreciated.

Being it 10:38, eight minutes past the hour of agreement of adjournment — it was a good evening of question and answer — I just ask for a member to make a motion to adjourn. Minister Reiter. This committee stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 22:38.]