



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. Greg Ottenbreit, Chair
Yorkton

Mr. Cam Broten, Deputy Chair
Saskatoon Massey Place

Ms. Doreen Eagles
Estevan

Mr. Glen Hart
Last Mountain-Touchwood

Ms. Judy Junor
Saskatoon Eastview

Ms. Joceline Schriemer
Saskatoon Sutherland

Ms. Christine Tell
Regina Wascana Plains

[The committee met at 16.04.]

The Chair: — Good afternoon, everybody. Seeing as it now past 4 o'clock, the chosen hour for our committee on Human Services to come to order, I will call the meeting to order. We are here today considering Bill 151, *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Amendment Act, 2010*.

In regards to our members today, we have one substitution: for Ms. Doreen Eagles, we have Mr. Denis Allchurch on the government side. We also have in attendance government members Mr. Glen Hart, Mr. Gord Wyant, and Ms. Christine Tell, and on the opposition side we have Mr. Cam Broten and Ms. Judy Junor.

We are tabling two of the following documents: HUS 61/26, the Disability Income Support Coalition letter requesting a meeting with the Standing Committee on Human Services dated September 16, 2010; as well as HUS 62/26, Standing Committee on Human Services correspondence from Deputy Chair to Chair regarding a meeting request from the Disability Income Support Coalition, dated October 4, 2010.

By practice the committee normally holds a general debate during the consideration of clause 1. Before we begin, I'll welcome the minister and I'll ask him, prior to making his comments, to introduce his officials and people with him today and then open with some brief comments. And then I'd ask any officials speaking thereafter to just briefly introduce themselves the first time you speak for the purposes of Hansard. So welcome, Mr. Minister.

Bill 151 — *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Amendment Act, 2010*

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Chair, thanks very much. And to all members of the committee, I just want to say how delighted we are to be back. On behalf of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, I'm pleased to offer a few initial remarks. But before doing so, as you've suggested, sir, I'll just commence with some introductions.

Clare Isman, here to my left, is our deputy minister. Beside Clare is Pat Parenteau, director of legislative services for us. To my right, Brent Brownlee, the director of public institutions and infrastructure. And in behind me, Alicia McGregor is our senior policy analyst regarding legislative services and Rhiannon Stromberg, the senior executive assistant to the deputy minister.

I'd also, if you'd permit me, Mr. Chair, like to recognize the diligence and work, tireless work of our assistant deputy minister, Reg Urbanowski. And he had every intention of being here. He has recently undergone very significant bypass surgery. I'm happy to report that he's recovering. He's recovering at home, and if I can, I just want to make sure that for the record we offer him our best wishes, a rapid recovery, and our best to his family as well, who I know have been very, very supportive. And again we appreciate the work of Dr. Urbanowski on many, many initiatives.

On that, sir, if I may, I'll just move into some brief remarks.

Clause 1

The Chair: — Before we proceed, Mr. Minister, I just want to officially say, we will now consider clause 1, short title, *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Amendment Act, 2010*. With that, I welcome your remarks and then we'll continue.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I recently had the opportunity and pleasure of moving the second reading of Bill 151, *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Amendment Act, 2010*. Through this amendment the government is working to bring the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, or, as it's well known across the province and indeed across the country, SIIT, to bring this legislation in line with that of most other post-secondary educational institutions across Saskatchewan. Specifically, the amendments to *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act* will provide SIIT with an exemption from school and municipal taxes on property owned by SIIT, explicitly that property which is used for educational purposes.

We all know and certainly in this room we all know that SIIT focuses on developing a strong workforce to benefit communities right across our province, most specifically focusing on allowing students from First Nations and Métis communities to meet their full potential, understanding the intrinsic value of education as well as the more instrumental value of education, that leading more directly to employment opportunities and, with those opportunities, enhanced prosperity and other benefits.

SIIT is building positive and collaborative relationships and partnerships with many stakeholders, not just in Saskatchewan but across the country, and these range from industry partners, partners with a variety of First Nations and Métis communities, with governments and other educational and training institutions, not to mention community-based organizations. In short, what the OECD [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development] refers to as social partners. These partnerships help to ensure that SIIT's skills training and educational programs and initiatives continue to meet the needs of, first and foremost, their students, of employers, and of relevant sectoral and community stakeholders across Saskatchewan.

Certainly I would like to commend SIIT for its impressive work and its commitment to ensuring that all of us continue to support the enhancement of education for First Nations and Métis people across the province.

Mr. Chair, importantly and for the record, it was the SIIT board of governors, the institution itself, that initiated this request. And as part of our due diligence, the ministry has undertaken consultations with a number of stakeholders on these proposed changes, and we have received assurances of support for the proposed amendments.

As always, I would welcome any questions from the committee members as we look forward to moving forward with this legislation on behalf of SIIT and, most especially, on behalf of First Nations and Métis students across the province of

Saskatchewan.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We'll now entertain questions. Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the minister for your opening remarks, and welcome to all of the officials here today. Certainly I share the sentiment of the minister with respect to the important role of SIIT and the work that they do in our province.

I do have a few questions, based on the minister's opening remarks. And I'll just get right into them, I suppose. What is the dollar value associated with this proposed exemption?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to speak directly to that. We anticipate it's going to be in the realm of about \$150,000.

Mr. Broten: — And could the minister please state which properties would be included in this exemption at present and the breakdown of that 150 to the different locations?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Again thank you, Mr. Chair. The principal properties are twofold, both in Saskatoon. The Saskatoon campus is principally in and around 229 4th Avenue South in Saskatoon — that's downtown. And as well . . . And so the 150,000 is on that property, the new Saskatoon Aviation Learning Centre, and that has yet to undergo assessment.

You'll forgive me if I just stray a little bit to say, as recently highlighted on the front page of *Saskatchewan Sage*, the Aboriginal newspaper of Saskatchewan, the front page offers this: "First Nations see benefits in Aviation Learning Centre." And it's that learning centre that has just been opened on November 5th, doing very, very important and impressive work that'll still have its assessment to be taken in the near future.

Mr. Broten: — So the \$150,000 is for the downtown Saskatoon location. Does the ministry have an estimate for what would be the dollar value for the Aviation Learning Centre?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Because the assessment has not been done, we're going to have to work with our local partners on that.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. In the minister's remarks there was reference to consultation that had occurred with respect to the stakeholders who were affected by this change. Could the minister please outline who has been consulted and when?

[16:15]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. Again thank you, Mr. Chair. I will highlight the list and then we're happy to go into more detail. We've consulted with the city of Saskatoon, the Saskatoon business improvement district, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the Saskatoon Catholic School Division, the Saskatoon Public School Division, the Ministry of Education, and last but certainly not least, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Out of the groups that were listed,

which organizations would be affected by having their funds reduced by this proposed change?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Regarding the city of Saskatoon, the implications would be just over \$62,000. On the schools side, there would be just under \$75,000. The library, just over 7,000; and the business improvement district, just over \$4,000.

Mr. Broten: — For the schools, you listed that as 75,000. What is the breakdown between public and Catholic for that dollar amount, please?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you again, Mr. Chair. The division of those dollars would be split between the two school divisions. The specifics of what that split would be would probably have a couple of different factors, and those would be some local variables based on population and also decisions that are made at the municipal level.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. For the organizations that are listed, has the ministry agreed to provide additional funding to offset the reduced revenue for any of the organizations listed? And if so, could you please state which organizations will receive additional funding because of this change and the dollar amount associated, please?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We've got it here. We see the \$75,000 being filled in by the Ministry of Education, and the other stakeholders have simply said that they would accept this change. This is in light of the municipal revenue-sharing agreement and other initiatives that we have.

Mr. Broten: — So just to be clear, for the \$75,000 amount, that will be backfilled by the Ministry of Education?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — And the other organizations have agreed to eat the loss for the time?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well especially in light of the municipal revenue-sharing agreement, yes.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. In the minister's remarks, there was reference to this exemption already being in place for other institutions. Could the minister please provide a list of the other institutions that receive this exemption?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. Both universities are included in this. We have SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] and the regional colleges as well.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Is the dollar amount for the total of all the exemptions available, or does that require a bit of digging? Just curious what the total amount would be for the exemptions.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — For the other institutions?

Mr. Broten: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We can get that for you.

Mr. Broten: — There are other institutions that might be interested in this type of exemption. And I think of GDI, Gabriel Dumont Institute. And I understand there's a draft GDI Act in the works, and there has been some discussions with the ministry about this possibility for GDI. Is this option of this exemption a possibility for other institutions?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, of course. On the issue of GDI, in fact conversations have been under way. In fact there is an invitation to GDI to move forward with a Bill, this year being the Year of the Métis. It was at the request of GDI that that actually be postponed, and we certainly respected that.

So the answer is of course as stakeholders within the GDI community are comfortable at moving forward, there are any number of initiatives that we're supportive of. And certainly I think that was reinforced at the recent celebrations for GDI on the 30th anniversary of the organization marking its significant contribution including, as we were there, just under \$50 million contributed to GDI by the federal government in a multi-year funding initiative.

So yes, we wouldn't have any problem with that. We're trying to be very respectful of that institution, its stakeholders, and the needs of the institution as they've been articulated to us.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you for that reply. In addition to GDI, is the minister aware of any other institutions that have asked for this type of exemption?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I think it's safe to say, to date the policy objective here is one of consistency. And it's certainly something that we'd be willing to look at if and as they come forward.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. At that time, Mr. Chair, that concludes my questions. And I thank the minister for his responses.

The Chair: — Any further questions? Seeing none, clause 1, short title, *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Amendment Act, 2010*, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: Bill No. 151, *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Amendment Act, 2010*. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I would ask that a member move that we report Bill 151, *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Amendment Act, 2010* without amendment. Mr. Hart.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, I so move.

The Chair: — Thank you. Mr. Hart moves. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Well thank you, Mr. Minister and officials, for your time today. Could I ask for someone to make a motion to adjourn today's meeting?

Mr. Wyant: — I so move.

The Chair: — Agreed. Carried. This committee now stands . . . Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Minister, would you like to make any closing remarks?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Chair, if I could, I would just like to say, offer my sincere thanks to yourself and all committee members and most especially the staff members here within the legislature that have helped to facilitate this today, as well as our officials from within the Ministry. I'm very, very pleased that we're making the kind of advancements that we are regarding this piece of legislation. I just want to say how much I appreciate that.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you to the officials and thank you for committee members. This committee now stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 16:25.]