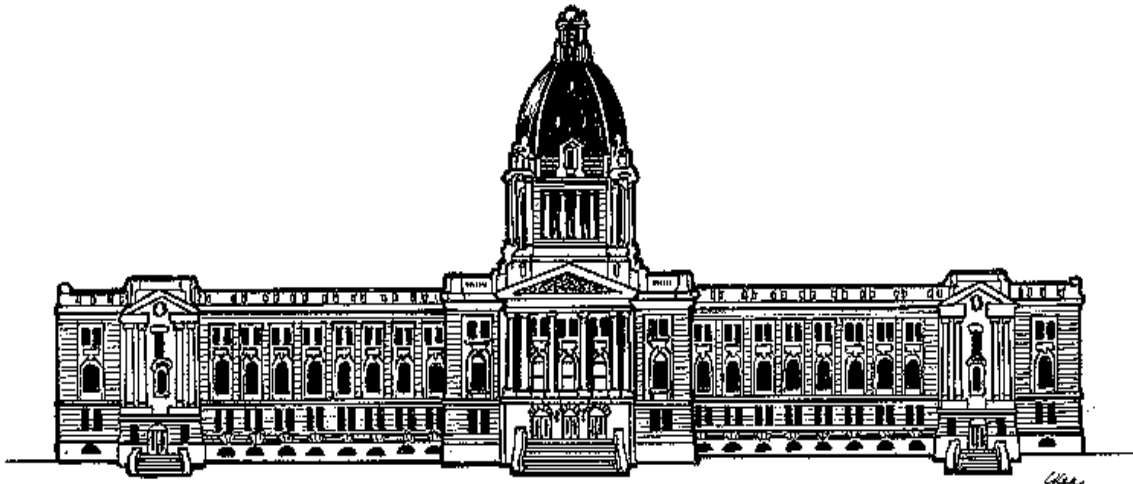




STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. Delbert Kirsch, Chair
Batoche

Mr. Cam Broten, Deputy Chair
Saskatoon Massey Place

Mr. Mark Docherty
Regina Coronation Park

Ms. Doreen Eagles
Estevan

Mr. Greg Lawrence
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Mr. Russ Marchuk
Regina Douglas Park

Mr. Paul Merriman
Saskatoon Sutherland

[The committee met at 19:00.]

The Chair: — Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Standing Committee on Human Services. We will introduce the members here. So I'm Delbert Kirsch. I'm Chair. Mr. Cam Broten is Deputy Chair. Mr. Mark Docherty is on our side over here, and Doreen Eagles is here. Russ Marchuk and Paul Merriman, and substitutions in Mr. Herb Cox tonight.

Before we begin I would like to table the document HUS 2/27, Ministry of Education, response to questions raised at the April 2nd, 2012 meeting of the committee regarding career development action plan, driver education, school debt borrowing, and family literacy. Dated April 16th, 2012, this document was distributed on Monday, April 23rd, 2012 to committee members.

This evening the committee will be considering the estimates and supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, including vote 37, central management and services, subvote (AE01), and vote 169, lending and investing activities, loans to student aid fund, subvote (AE01).

Before we begin I'd like to remind the officials to introduce themselves when they speak for the purposes of Hansard. We will now begin our consideration of vote 37, Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, central management and services, subvote (AE01). Minister Norris is here with his officials, and Minister, would you introduce your officials and give an opening statement? Thank you.

General Revenue Fund
Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration
Vote 37

Subvote (AE01)

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and good evening to you and all the members of the committee. I'd be delighted to offer some introductions before proceeding through to my comments.

To my left I have Clare Isman, my deputy minister; and many of you will be familiar with the good work that Clare does on behalf of our ministry. Just behind me is Mr. Rupen Pandya. He is the assistant deputy minister for immigration, employment, and our training division. David Boehm, right here to my right, he is the assistant deputy minister of post-secondary education; again back in behind me, Karen Allen, the assistant deputy minister for corporate and support services. We also have Dr. Reg Urbanowski, special advisor to the deputy minister, and we're pleased that Dr. Urbanowski is with us this evening. Some will remember and recall that he was recovering last year from some surgery, so we're happy to see that he's joined us. And we do have a number of other ministry officials in and I'll be happy to offer those introductions if and as needed, Mr. Chair. If it's all right I'll just proceed to my remarks.

The Government of Saskatchewan's 2012-13 budget is meant to further shape and sustain the Saskatchewan advantage, which includes that it is the only balanced budget among all of Canada's provinces. And it's focused on ensuring that we are

servicing the needs of our stakeholders and citizens, but that we're also ever minded about the issue of sustainability. And that is helping to ensure that we are fostering and facilitating environment to encourage economic growth that's under way, record economic growth that's under way across the province.

These priorities are reflected in the plan for the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, and I'll just simply say that this has been an important year for Saskatchewan and certainly the prospects continue to look very bright. First and foremost, we've reached a new high in population. And I'll paraphrase from Tony Blair's recent memoirs where he says a simple measure of a jurisdiction, of its progress, is whether people are moving in or moving out; and we've certainly seen in recent years, under the leadership of Premier Brad Wall, where people are moving in to Saskatchewan, and more are moving back home to Saskatchewan. And that is reflective of the momentum that we have under way within the province.

It's also been a year where we've seen some real progress of this growth as it is, the benefits of the growth are being shared with people across the province. Today in Saskatchewan we have the lowest unemployment rate in the country at 4.8 per cent.

We also, for the month of March, have record employment with more than 529,000 people working in the province. We also have a record as far as full-time employment. And we know, importantly, we're also seeing that not only do we have more people working than ever before and more people working full-time than ever before for the month of March, we also see that our labour force is becoming increasingly inclusive where First Nations and Métis employment continues on the rise for the 10th consecutive month. For March it went up by 13.7 per cent. That's an additional 4,700 jobs, and importantly, Aboriginal youth employment increased by over 9 per cent, up over 800 jobs.

We can see that there are a number of indicators that continue to reflect and reinforce that, as the benefits of growth are being shared with people across the province, we see that average weekly earnings continue to go up. In fact most recently the numbers have Saskatchewan with average weekly earnings up over \$900, and that is the highest earning on record for our province.

And there are a number of indicators that reflect and reinforce the strength of our economy. Exports are up. Manufacturing shipments are up. Retail trade is up. Real GDP [gross domestic product] growth is up. Small business optimism is upbeat, and public and private investments across the province continue to be on the rise.

As we see the strength of the Saskatchewan economy and this strength is recognized by RBC [Royal Bank of Canada], by BMO [Bank of Montreal], by the Conference Board of Canada — all of which forecast that Saskatchewan will lead the country in economic growth this year — we know that there are challenges and opportunities that come with this type of growth, that come with Saskatchewan being seen and understood as being a growth leader across the country.

One of these is what I will call how we can address Saskatchewan's talent challenge. How we can help meet our red-hot labour market. Where today in Saskatchewan on the saskjobs.ca website — a website that had more than a million hits in the month of March alone — today there are more than 11,700 jobs open and available. But this talent challenge looms ever larger when we look five, seven, to ten years out and we see that the numbers will likely grow to between 75 and 90,000 jobs opening up due to both the rate of growth that is expected to occur within Saskatchewan, but also compounded by the demographic forces as a number of people across the province look to retire.

We also have a challenge of continually working to address and ensure that there's a tighter alignment between educational programs and skills training programs and individuals that want to roll up their sleeves and transition more smoothly from learning to earning. That is, from their educational opportunities straight out into jobs. And so we need to continue to focus on that transition, because that really helps to define the success, in many ways, of many of our post-secondary and skills training programs. We know we're not alone, that other jurisdictions are also confronting these challenges, especially with reference to our New West partners.

So when we think about the significance and importance of the work of this budget and the investments that are contained within the budget, we do it with an eye to help make sure that more people in Saskatchewan can meet their full potential, because that's how that we can ensure that Saskatchewan will meet its full potential and continue to serve as a growth leader and model for others across the province.

To address these labour market issues, we have within the ministry a three-fold strategy. First and foremost, with this budget, since being elected in 2007 and having the privilege of being re-elected in 2011, we have made record investments in post-secondary education and skills training — \$3.5 billion in post-secondary education, an all-time record for the province of Saskatchewan.

We have put a special emphasis with millions of dollars focused on First Nations and Métis programs, that is dollars explicitly being utilized by our partners to help foster and facilitate the success of First Nations and Métis students across Saskatchewan.

So record investments in post-secondary education, record investments in Saskatchewan's young people, record investments for our First Nations and Métis people through this ministry.

We're also working to unite with families and communities in a very concerted way to say to those that are from Saskatchewan and have moved elsewhere across the country and around the world, now's a great time to come home, welcoming our expats back. And we're seeing families reunited and communities reinvigorated by the return of many of these Saskatchewan expats. And there are many stories to be shared on this front, both by families and communities, but also by some of our institutions and industry partners.

And of course the third prong of our strategy is to welcome

newcomers from across the country and around the world. We're seeing increased interest from other parts of Canada. In fact a few weeks ago I was in Toronto at the National Job Fair joined by 19 employers that had on offer 500 jobs, and that resonated in Ontario, the particular day I was there, just before the Easter long weekend and break. In Toronto at that time, we learned that there are 280,000 people unemployed in the Greater Toronto Area alone, so there was a great degree of interest in what was going on and continues to go on here in Saskatchewan. In fact on the saskjobs.ca website for the month of March, there were 84,000 hits from the province of Ontario alone, giving us a good indication that other parts of the country are paying particular attention to opportunities here within Saskatchewan.

And of course welcoming newcomers from around the world — and I'll speak in more detail to our efforts in immigration — that while there are more steps to be taken and we have a lens of continuous improvement, just yesterday we welcomed employers that joined us in Ireland during the recruitment mission there. We had 29 employers join us, and the goal was to fulfill about 275 job offerings or openings, and as of yesterday when we made the announcement, 282 job offers had been made. And within days, newcomers are arriving here in Saskatchewan as a result of that mission, and that will continue for the next number of months. And so we're very pleased with that mission, and that builds on other initiatives in other parts of the world.

[19:15]

So this threefold initiative — investing first and foremost in Saskatchewan, welcoming back our expats, and welcoming newcomers from across the country and around the world — really helps to define our strategy and our budget supports, our overall strategy, through key investments in post-secondary education, training, student supports, and through the welcoming of newcomers, that is through immigration.

As I said, a key element of the Saskatchewan advantage looks to the issue of sustainability, the need for continuous improvement, and an eye on efficiency in the delivery of programs and services. As in other parts of government, we in the ministry are committed to this spirit of continuous improvement. We're looking for lessons that we're applying regarding lean techniques. And we're looking for our partners, our institutional partners, to share in this spirit of efficiency and effectiveness and continuous improvement to make sure that these valuable public dollars go to our students and to our scholars and our researchers and to our newcomers in the most efficient and effective way possible, and that we can therefore account for real progress that's being made in maximizing public dollars.

And the public dollars that I have the honour and opportunity of overseeing within the ministry are considerable. The investments on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan within the budget are \$890.6 million. That's an increase of 4.1 per cent over last year's budget. We've strengthened our investment in students and introduced measures to keep post-secondary education affordable while continuing to support the excellence of our post-secondary institutions. In fact more than \$639 million is directed in this budget to our post-secondary

institutions.

The funding increases are in line with what we've seen in recent post-secondary budgets elsewhere in Canada, where sustainability is an increasingly important theme. To this end, we signed agreements with presidents of both the University of Regina and University of Saskatchewan that are focused on enhancing predictability and affordability and excellence for our students as well as our institutions.

The University of Saskatchewan is the first institution to announce its new tuition rates and has abided by the spirit of this memorandum of understanding. Tuition levels at the University of Saskatchewan continue to be lower than most of its peer post-secondary institutions across the country. Indeed the president of the students' union at the University of Saskatchewan, Scott Hitchings, said recently that the tuition fee increases are reasonable for the most part. And that's important for us to receive that kind of feedback and listen very closely to our students. And Brett Fairbairn, the provost and vice-president academic at the University of Saskatchewan, says regular incremental increases are preferable to sudden, large spikes, as have happened in the past under the previous administration. These are harder to plan for, he notes.

In this budget, we've also introduced new initiatives to support students, including the new Saskatchewan advantage scholarship, which offers \$500 a year to new grade 12 graduates who attend a Saskatchewan post-secondary institution to a maximum of \$2,000. And as well, we're also focusing enhanced student loans that will be forgiven for doctors and nurses who practise in underserved rural and remote communities across the province. And we know how important that initiative is when we think about the advances that continue to be made on initiatives like wait times here within the province.

In addition this budget provides \$13.5 million to train the additional 300 nurses and 100 additional physicians a year that we committed to during our first mandate. And regarding the nurse training initiative, we have of course shifted to a two-provider model so that SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] and the University of Regina are now partnering in the training of nurses, and that program is now well under way. And the other partner is the University of Saskatchewan and they have separate streams. And what we're doing is offering more opportunities for more Saskatchewan students to participate in nurse training, and again the feedback has been quite positive as far as more opportunities for young people to stay and fulfill their dreams right here in Saskatchewan.

We're also starting on our commitment to increase the number of nurse practitioner seats by 20, with an initial increment upwards of five seats.

We're also making changes to a couple of student support programs. The non-repayable Saskatchewan student bursary provided to reduce student loans will no longer be available to above middle-income students. The rationale for this shift is very purposeful. That is, we want to maximize the benefits which will remain targeted on those students most in need of these dollars. In other words, more students who need

assistance will have access to this program.

There is also an administrative change to the graduate retention program to more accurately reflect the manner in which the benefit is being paid out. More than 30,000 post-secondary graduates are benefiting from the graduate retention program, the most aggressive youth retention program in the country. Yesterday I gave my second reading speech on these changes, and graduates will see no changes in the amount of their benefit or how they apply for it.

As well the budget provides \$107 million in support for students through an array of programs. We've also increased our funding of student financial assistance by \$6.8 million.

The budget includes an additional \$1 million to support planning and design for a new student residence as well as child care facilities and related amenities at the University of Regina. This builds on our track record, under the leadership of Premier Brad Wall, of increasing funding for student residents. Since being elected in 2007, we've increased funding for student residents by more than 3,000 per cent, and this continues to build on that track record.

We also have an additional \$1 million for the continued construction of Southeast Regional College and to improve upon the building there where construction continues.

The budget provides \$2.4 million to support the ongoing construction of the Health Sciences centre at the University of Saskatchewan. And at the same time, we've expanded the practice of institutions borrowing to fund sustaining capital. And this practice was established in 2003.

The financing option gives institutions like the University of Saskatchewan the autonomy and flexibility to address critical priorities while at the same time ensuring public dollars are available to be invested in priority areas. We're working with the University of Saskatchewan to help ensure that these precious public dollars can go as far as they possibly can. And that's consistent with helping to meet the needs of being one of the fastest growing provinces in the country. To be sure, this practice will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. And again we do this in partnership with the University of Saskatchewan.

With this year's investment, we've provided more than \$378 million in capital funding for post-secondary institutions over the course of five years. For this year, the ministry's investing \$17 million in Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions to support key areas of our innovation agenda: dollars, new dollars for the Canadian Light Source synchrotron, the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization, and the new international vaccine centre, as well as the Canada Excellence Research Chair relating to water. Supporting research, development, and the commercialization of our innovation is a priority right across our post-secondary system, but with a key emphasis on the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan.

Over the past five years, including through this budget, our government has invested a record 3.5 billion in post-secondary education and related skills training. We know that there's more to do, but this is a record investment that's already paying dividends, not simply to our students but to communities right

across the province.

Regarding labour force development, the province's success depends on the quality of our workforce, and the quality of our workforce is dependent in large measure on the extent of our post-secondary education system and our various training programs. That's why in this budget we are investing \$109 million in a broad range of skills training from work readiness and life skills programming for people with barriers to employment, and we stretch that all the way across a continuum into a number of programs, for example through to apprenticeship training and other programs that are absolutely vital in the new Saskatchewan. These investments are geared to meeting our labour market needs and to better ensure that we're achieving the best outcomes for these precious public dollars.

Through our partnership with the Apprenticeship Commission, our government has made major investments in the apprenticeship system and in our young apprentices in Saskatchewan. Since 2007 we've increased funding by 58 per cent to the Apprenticeship Commission, and that now sits at close to \$20 million. As a result of our government's investments beginning in 2007 with our first budget — 2007 and '08 — the number of apprentices has continued to climb. In fact it's increased by nearly 50 per cent.

This year the Apprenticeship Commission has announced that fees are going up. They're going up slightly. This is the first increase since 2004, but even so, fees in Saskatchewan remain significantly below fee levels in both British Columbia and Alberta, our New West partners. Additional financial contributions from apprentices and employers, these are appropriate in helping to balance the funding which is required to address the unprecedented growth in our apprenticeship training programs.

I also want to highlight some progress, real progress that we're making regarding First Nations and Métis apprentices. In 2011-12 we've had a total of 607 First Nations and Métis apprentices receiving technical training. There has been a 24 per cent increase in enrolment from First Nations and Métis apprentices since we were first elected. Where we see great signs of optimism is that we've seen an increased number of Aboriginal journeyperson certifications go up by more than 100 per cent in the last five years.

In total, the ministry's investing more than \$47 million in post-secondary education and skills training for First Nations and Métis people in this budget. This includes targeted programs under adult basic education and through workplace essential skills. We're also partnering with Saskatchewan tribal councils to build capacity on-reserve to support training and employment initiatives where First Nations people live. With almost 15,000 First Nations and Métis people enrolled in post-secondary education . . . And I want to make sure that the numbers are reflected. In 2007 as we came in, there were about 13,000 First Nations and Métis people enrolled. So enrolment has gone up by almost 2,000 across the system. While there's more to do, that marks real progress.

[19:30]

It's because of these successes that I feel the future is very

bright, with the full knowledge that there is more to do. And that sense of optimism is reflected and reinforced by the most recent Aboriginal employment numbers which, as I've said, for the 10th consecutive month, we've seen year-over-year increases, 4,700 new jobs for the month of March and Aboriginal youth employment continuing to go up by the hundreds.

We know there's more to do, and that's why I was very pleased to join my colleagues, the Minister for First Nations and Métis Relations, the Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff, as well as the Minister Responsible for Education, the Hon. Donna Harpauer. The three of us were there as we launched a joint task force to eliminate the education and employment gaps that have persisted in Saskatchewan for decades. And this task force is being led by Gary Merasty, a highly-regarded and esteemed executive within Cameco Corporation and former Member of Parliament and a person that has a solid track record in a number of fields including the educational fields. He's joined with his colleagues on that task force, and they've been charged and have taken up the challenge to help us eliminate the education and employment gaps that continue to persist.

Through this partnership with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, as well as the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, the joint task force will consult with the First Nations and Métis people across the province and provide advice on practical solutions that work for individuals and their families and communities.

We're also focusing on welcoming newcomers. Our budget continues this strong commitment to continue to enhance the dynamic, diverse, and cosmopolitan character that now defines Saskatchewan communities. Since 2007 newcomers from over 180 countries have settled in more than 325 communities right across the province.

In this budget we're investing \$6.8 million in settlement and integration services and support. This will match the level of expenditures in 2011 and '12. We are strongly committed to the successful settlement, integration of our new neighbours, and these include 4,000 nominees and their families that will come in through the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program.

Importantly, Saskatchewan has seen a marked improvement regarding successful settlement. I'm happy to report that 86 per cent of newcomers that have arrived through our provincial nominee program, that is the third highest number across the country, are successfully settling in Saskatchewan and calling our province home.

Newcomers in turn are contributing significantly to our communities, to our economy, and to helping to fulfill the promise of Saskatchewan as reflected and reinforced in our provincial motto, "from many peoples, strength."

To conclude, Mr. Chair, I'd like to restate that this budget makes prudent and responsible investments — investments for our students, investments for our citizens, investments for our new neighbours. And we do this within a framework that focuses on sustainability, making sure that we're maximizing these precious public dollars that have been entrusted to our government and, in this case, directly to and through the

ministry to help foster and fuel the new Saskatchewan.

Mr. Chair, I welcome the questions and comments of the members.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for those stimulating remarks. And now we'll have questions. Mr. Broten.

Mr. Broten: — Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the minister for his opening remarks. Welcome to the officials and to fellow committee members.

We have a few hours tonight and a few hours on another night or another time, I understand. So tonight just my ideas for going through some of the content, if we can go through the budget document on a few different votes looking at different components. And then once we go through that, we'll look at some different themes or some different topics specifically, with maybe a few tangents along the way. We'll see how it goes.

I'll start things off on this year's budget, page 29. Well actually referring back to last year's estimates on page 27, the FTE [full-time equivalent] staff complement for 2011-12 was forecast at 413.8, but in this year's estimates on page 29, the '11-12 staff complement is listed at 408.8. So with that difference, I just have a few questions. Could the minister please explain why an additional five positions were eliminated over and above the other 17 included in last year's budget? Just why those numbers aren't the same and what that's about, please?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure.

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Clare Isman, deputy minister, Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration. The difference between the 413 and the 408.8 is a restatement that's due to the transfer of three FTEs to the Ministry of Finance with regard to the consolidation of accounts payable and the centralization initiative that's under way, as well as two FTEs that we transferred to the Ministry of Education. We have a shared services agreement with Education, and we found that their needs could be better met by transferring the FTEs to their ministry rather than being embedded in ours.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. So was it a realignment of what the ministry was doing in certain areas? The situations where people transferred over to Finance or Education, were they already working within those realms, so to speak?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you again, Mr. Chair. Yes. The work of the individuals is the same. The individuals that are working in accounts payable within our ministry are being, well the FTEs are being transferred to the Ministry of Finance as a result of the centralization initiative for accounts payable. And with regard to the two individuals that were working in support services, it was mailroom staff, and the work was predominantly related to the Ministry of Education. So the same work, and the people will be doing the same work in the new ministry.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. With this year's budget,

an additional 19.2 positions will be eliminated from the ministry. Could the minister please explain where that reduction will take place and what positions will be affected, please.

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With regard to the movement of FTEs from the 2011-12 estimates to the '12-13 estimates, the ministry right now hasn't identified those specific positions in terms of actually making the move in terms of that reduction.

What we have done though in the ministry, is we have looked for areas where we believe there to be significant opportunities for efficiency and effectiveness gains through process reviews, as well as looking at the lines of business to ensure that those things that we're doing are actually important to meet the needs of our clients and our stakeholders.

Our commitment throughout the changes within the ministry and the reduction of FTEs has been based on a premise of no job loss, no job abolishment, that we are making the shifts inside the ministry as a result of people retiring or choosing to leave the ministry if there are other opportunities open to them.

When we look at our workforce plan, one of the things that we know for sure is that for '12-13 we've got 73 individuals in the ministry that are currently eligible to retire, and projecting out to '13-14, we have 11. So we've got 84 people potentially eligible to retire, and so when we consider that in light of the savings that we might get within efficiency and effectiveness gains inside the ministry, the more significant question for us is our ability to recruit and retain people into the critical roles that we have in the ministry, to serve our client needs, and to meet our mandate.

Mr. Broten: — So just to be clear, the reduction of the 19.2 as it's estimated here, it's the minister's view that that will be accomplished exclusively through retirements combined with the reviews?

Ms. Isman: — Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. In the deputy's remarks, the phrase process review was used. Could the minister please, or anyone, provide a bit more of an explanation as to what this process review looks like and what sort of steps are occurring in order to ensure that the right people are in the right jobs?

[19:45]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much. Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. For our ministry — and I'll just have a few initial comments and maybe an example, and then Deputy Isman will continue — as I've stated, we have a lens of continual and continuous improvement, or what we can characterize as a focus on organizational excellence. And that's supported by a number of initiatives that we have that are ongoing. One of these relates to the use of lean techniques. And I thought what I'd do is just offer one example where we've been able to find some efficiencies that we think we're better positioned to serve some of our key partners and stakeholders with and at the same time find some efficiencies within the ministry.

We have an initiative called employment assistance for persons

with disabilities. And you know, when we looked at the application approval time, we saw that it was taking about 25 days for these applications to be processed and to be approved. And we set out a goal to shave off about nine days or to find an efficiency of about 37 per cent. What we were able to do was, by drawing on some of the best practices from within the ministry, consulting closely with our officials, we actually were able to find a reduction of 17 days for clients of the employment assistance for persons with disabilities, a 61 per cent efficiency. And subsequently we took these lessons learned and applied them to other clients that we're working with across the ministry.

And so there's just one snapshot of drawing on the expertise and insights of those from within the ministry, providing faster, better service for those with disabilities, and then taking some of those lessons learned and applying them more broadly.

I think at this point what I'll do is I'll ask Deputy Isman to actually walk through . . . Again this is just one component of the lens of organizational excellence that we hope, where we're not simply finding efficiencies within the ministry, but actually offering enhanced services to our partners and those that we work with. So, Clare?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the minister noted, we've worked really hard inside the ministry with regard to our goal of achieving organizational excellence and really worked and have to say, very much supported by our employees in terms of achieving the goal and really looking inwardly to say, are we delivering the right programs in the right way to achieve the outcomes? And as you said, do we have the right people doing the right jobs in terms of achieving our overall goals?

We've linked this all to the public service renewal initiative lead by the deputy minister to the Premier. And really that's allowed us to focus our attention and really from the grassroots up to look at where some of those initiatives are.

Some of the examples date back a number of years from when we initially started. For example, we moved the student loan applications online in the ministry, saving significant administrative time. The following year we actually eliminated our central supply room and filing our forms in triplicate to reduce the number of payment forms that we had. So it was a simple shift in our systems and processes in what we needed which eliminated some of the workload and the touch points with regard to our staff.

We made some changes with regard to how we are doing forecasting and budgeting in our corporate and support services areas, as well as some work in training that we did across the ministry to help our front line staff in terms of some of that work. We also moved our provincial training allowance and immigration applications online, once again saving administrative supports.

We changed our workflow and we installed the new file system with regard to student financial assistance. And as a result of doing that we actually saved \$200,000 in rent savings over the course of the lease simply by freeing up some space because of a new filing system that we had implemented. We also did some work with regard to the collecting of labour market data

by consolidating people into a singular unit and creating a single database inside the ministry.

One of the initiatives that we're currently looking at right now that has, I think, a very specific goal with regard to this year's savings, is with regard to how we're managing contract processes across the ministry. Appreciating that we've got contracts that are actually let through career and employment services as well as our immigration branch, as well as through the post-secondary institutions and corporate services, what we've done is we've consolidated a team of people to actually look at our contract processing across the ministry with the goal of establishing a singular process of doing contract management, establishing a single form and process for doing it.

The goal of when we are then letting a contract and we are going out to the same agencies, that we only have to do one as opposed to multiple ones by simply bringing forward the proposal into one consolidated place, and then if we have to do a contract we can do it once instead of potentially three times. And as well then centralizing our training for our staff so that we've got one way of entering our contracts into our system, one way of monitoring them, and one central accountability mechanism to make sure that we're doing it as effectively and efficiently as we can.

Because the people that are managing contracts are spread out around the province, by doing this is it should enable us to track it better, to train people better, and then to save significant resources in terms of how we're actually managing the contract process inside the ministry. So that's one example for this year that we've got on the books as a significant initiative going forward.

Mr. Broten: — I thank you for that explanation. I have a question to better understand how this works in the situation of when an individual retires and making sure that the right person is doing the right job. So if person X retires and he or she has been doing a certain job, does the ministry then look at who within AEEI [Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration] could potentially also . . . Is the first step doing a review to see if that job is needed? And then if it's determined that that job is needed, does the ministry then see if there's someone else that could move horizontally or up or around to fill that? Is that what happens? And then I guess the second part to the question is, if that person is not available and it's determined that that position is still needed, is that when there would be a new posting for a position?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. We're fortunate to have Deputy Isman. I'll get her to walk through this in a little bit of detail, just given the question. We're fortunate that she certainly is making a significant contribution in her current role as deputy minister for the ministry, but she was in charge of the Public Service Commission as well and so she comes with some additional insights that we might ask her to draw upon as well, just in trying to be accurate as far as what that looks like, as far as some of the succession planning that goes on and some of the allocation of the human resource piece. So we'll just turn it back over to Deputy Isman.

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the first step in the

process if someone leaves the ministry, whether it by way of retirement or whether it by way of simply taking another opportunity somewhere else, is to absolutely ask the question if that job is needed in that way and the way it's currently configured or if there are potentially other ways to do the work.

If it is deemed that the position is required, looking internally first within the ministry, and certainly within the parameters of both *The Public Service Act* regulations and our collective bargaining agreements, the obligation certainly to post the job and then to secure the services of an individual, and if it's an in-scope job with the senior qualified candidate, and if it's an out-of-scope job with the candidate that is most meritorious.

If it's an internal candidate in the ministry, then that creates a bumping effect and that it creates a different vacancy at a different level, and you review that process yet again. And at some point you will work your way to a final stage of whether or not there is a position that is no longer needed inside the ministry. And if there is not, then you simply fill them and at some point in the future . . . And as I said, we expect so many retirements that at some point in the system, coupled with the efficiency and effectiveness initiatives that we have under way, that those kinds of opportunities we've generally found over the last couple of years make, avail themselves to making the kind of changes that we're looking for.

With regard to eventually choosing which positions it is that you may eliminate, once again it's based on the fact of ensuring that we've got the right people with the right skills doing the right job. And so our succession management plan and every human resource decision that we take is based on that in terms of, can we achieve our mandate? Can we provide the services that we need to provide in the way in which we are supposed to provide them?

And ultimately and certainly what we've been able to find over the last two years is that we're able to, within the scope and the size of the public service, manage those FTEs accordingly.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. On the issue of process review, and the explanation was given about being able to find certain efficiencies, whether that's doing more things electronically or not requiring triplicate of forms and such, and those at face value sound like decent steps. Have there been any other, more substantive changes that the ministry has taken with respect to partnering with organizations?

I know I think both the minister and the deputy in some remarks talked about the importance of working with community partners. How would the minister characterize the ministry's current engagement with community partners in terms of the OCs [order in council] that come across my desk after they're signed from you folks saying, you know, X number of dollars to this agency for X number of services, and the contract and the terms of agreement? Is it the minister's view that the level of partnering with such organizations is about the same as it's been, or is it matching sort of changes that have been happening with the budget? Or is there a greater reliance on partnerships of this sort with respect to the types of services and programs that the ministry provides?

[20:00]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much again, Mr. Chair. If I put this in the context of the budget and we think about \$890.6 million, that's an increase of \$34.8 million — 4.1 per cent. If I've captured the spirit of your question, then what's important is to think about those dollars and how they flow to our partners and kind of what's retained within the ministry as a snapshot or as one indicator of the significance of our partners.

So when we think about our post-secondary partners, we can think about \$642 million, a little more than that but I'll round it to \$642 million, 72 per cent of the budget goes out to our post-secondary partners. When we think about student supports, those dollars that are available to students and their families, that's about 12 per cent . . . [inaudible] . . . I've highlighted more than \$107 million. When we think about labour force development, that's about \$109 million for those training funds. On immigration we can think about \$12.7 million. You can see that the bulk of the budget, almost all of it goes out to our partners. And so we know how significant those partners are.

On the recent example that I just used regarding the lean initiative, and I'll just come back to this. This is the one . . . We call it EAPD [employability assistance for people with disabilities]. This is the employment assistance program for persons with disabilities. Not only did we undertake to work with our own officials; we actually worked with our community-based partner on this and took lessons learned directly from our partner on how to help foster and facilitate greater efficiency and effectiveness.

The spirit of the question, and I'm happy . . . If this is iterative, we'll just go back and forth and make sure we're providing the information. But I just wanted to provide a snapshot for the budget. Almost all of these dollars — \$890 million — almost all of it goes out to our partners. So if the question was about the significance of our partners, this is a record budget for the ministry. And these dollars flow out to our partners, and there are more dollars flowing out. And we think that reflects the significance of how these partnerships continue to evolve and I think continue to serve the people of the province.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you for that. And maybe I'll narrow the question a bit more, but I do appreciate those remarks that you made.

Most certainly the ministry's had many partners for many years and a lot of funding flows. I guess my question was more related to the changes or the approach of reducing the size of the civil service, and if there are examples, to the minister's knowledge, of what has traditionally been core business or the bread and butter of work that civil servants would do and if there is now an increased reliance on other organizations, perhaps partnering with a CBO [community-based organization] to deliver such a, like a service, I'm thinking, maybe immigration as an example or whatever the case may.

Is that something that the ministry is utilizing in the approach of reducing the number of FTEs and looking at process reviews? And maybe, I guess, and the question, the debate is in some cases maybe it is a better way to do it. But in some cases, maybe it's just a cheaper way to do it, and the better way to do it would be leaving it within the civil service. Is that something that the ministry is wrestling with and discussing as it looks at

this process review?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, and we'll get you some examples of that here right away.

Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. We'll just highlight an initiative that we began here over the course of the last 18 to 24 months. We're actually drawing on our partners to do some work that wasn't being done previously. That's another way of framing, I think the sense, the question that is on the connection between learning and earning for adult basic education. And I think what this demonstrates is some of the program innovation that we have under way.

[20:15]

So I'd like to introduce Ted Amendt. He's our executive director on some key programs that we run. Ted, why don't you just walk us through the adult basic education essential skills for the workplace. It's a relatively new program. We're seeing some very real significant improvements in results. And here's an example where probably traditionally this wasn't being captured, and we weren't in a very, we weren't in a great place. But we saw some of the limitations for the ministry, so we've turned to some of our partners. And I'll get Ted to also just reflect on some of the outcomes that we're seeing and what that looks like. Because the numbers are — not that it's all about numbers — but the outcomes are actually increasingly impressive and important for us. Ted, why don't you just tell us about that.

Mr. Amendt: — Thank you. Ted Amendt, executive director of program innovation. Thank you, Minister, and Mr. Chair.

So the program that the minister has referenced is the adult basic education essential skills for the workplace. It's an initiative that started in 2010-11 with an initial investment of 1.7 million. It's delivered through . . . It's targeted for we call level 1 and level 2 literacy learners. It's the literacy learners.

We wanted a specific focus on First Nations and Métis as a target. And we opened it up, an RFP [request for proposal] process, to anyone really — communities, could be First Nations, could be school boards in one example — and with the one provider that they needed to partner with one of our publicly funded post-secondary institutions where the dollars would flow. And so that program started in 2010-11, as I said, with 19 projects, about 400 learners that partook in that first year.

And what we found, because of the focus on them transitioning to employment and engaging employers early in the process, so you have the partnership of . . . could be communities, could be a First Nation working with a regional college as an example with employers locally, that we were able to transition more successfully some of those learners in those programs to employment.

So following the first year as an example, when we had watched and tracked sort of level 1 and 2, employment results in previous traditional ABE [adult basic education] I guess I would call it, our results were around the 20 per cent, 23 per cent, I think would be average over the past three years. And as

a result of this first-year round that we did, our numbers were significantly higher because of the some of the good partnerships that were under way.

So I have the specific number here, Minister. There was about 36 per cent who gained employment in our first round and 40 per cent of those went on to further . . . an additional 40 per cent went on to further education. So we would say 76 per cent would be our success rate of that program.

The program was also maintained and increased actually in last year's budget. It went to 2.5 million. We had 24 projects under way and this year the budget has sustained as again at 2.5 million. Our RFP is out and we are anxious to see who comes in this year.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Ted, thanks very much. There's just a snapshot as far as a new approach to adult basic education and that, you know, the delivery of it in working with both employers and our community-based partners is that we're actually, I think, maximizing these dollars. We're seeing real results, at least tracking in the right direction in somewhat significantly, and here's a case where we didn't need to increase the size of the ministry. We worked with our partners and with employers. And so far, so far, so good. We're heading in the right direction on this one. Ted, thanks very much.

Mr. Broten: — When engaging in that type of partnership that was used there as an example, the one bit of measurement that was used was those finding employment.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — If I could, there were two principles. And that is, one is finding employment; the second is continuing on with education. So what we're trying to do is actually make sure that we understand and identify success in a broader context than just simply employment. We also want to see that continuing on and moving on with studies is also seen as success within this case.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you for that clarification. Are those the two main ways that the measurement of outcomes would be measured? Or is there a different, a more complex or detailed way of evaluating the success of whoever is successful in winning the RFP? My question, how do you determine if it's good value for money, and if the results are coming there beyond the two things that were listed?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — If I could, and we'll come back to it, I just want to . . . There are kind of two orders of success, if I understand the question. First and foremost, success of the students would be one and then . . . But your point I think, if I've got the question right — I just want to make sure we do — and that is the merit and maximizing of the actual program itself. That is, how do we award the RFP and . . .

Mr. Broten: — Yes, I suppose the student outcomes would be one aspect of the larger picture as to whether or not it's the smartest and the best way to go. And so just a bit more information on that, please.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. What we'll do is actually make reference to this specific example. The matrix will change depending on program offering, but just

because as we're using this example . . . So I'll let Ted get into that, and then I'll come back with maybe a case study or two just to highlight, just briefly, about what this looks like kind of on the ground.

This is from the main website of the ministry, and it can be accessed directly by the public just right through that. So Ted, why don't you walk us through just this one example of what the matrix looks like.

Mr. Amendt: — Thank you, Minister, and Mr. Chair. So the example that we talked about was the adult basic education and essential skills for the workplace. I reference it as an RFP that we publish, and our RFP is posted, and also with the RFP posted so there's a transparency with our internal processes for selection. We have posted a rubric for evaluation so that as the proponents are entering into the proposal writing phase of it they understand sort of what is the areas of key priority that the ministry is trying to highlight and to try to hit with the project.

So I'm going to just run through some of them here. An example is around partnerships. And there'll be a score, 0 to 3, and some of the scores are weighted times two. So as an example, partnerships, strong, formal partnershiped and signed letters committing to the project as an example, would score a proponent quite high. That it serves obviously low literacy levels, 1 and 2, would score high. Partnerships with employers and early engagement with employers, and that there is robust job shadowing and work placement is one of also our key areas.

That it does respectful work experience that emphasizes cultural awareness and continued coaching, as another example. That it serves First Nations and Métis or other identified groups. In this case, if the proposal came in at a high end of about greater than 90 per cent First Nations and Métis involved in the project, it would be weighted higher.

That there's a needs assessment to identify obviously that there is a need and local demand in the area for the program. That there is a comprehensive training plan. That there is an appropriate intake and assessment process to make sure that learners are being set up for success. That there's career and life skills counselling, etc., some portfolio learning included in the project.

That it addresses workplace essential skills, obviously, and that it uses workplace-suitable curriculum in the program. That the program is flexible to meet the needs of learners, as an example, it could be part-time or evenings. That it handles barriers that we know ABE learners are faced with, as an example, child care and transportation.

Delivering outcomes, the capacity of the organization to deliver the program. That the budget is complete and that the information — in this case we have 12 questions in the package — is answered comprehensively.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I'll just, if I can, I'll just highlight a couple of examples, again, with specific reference to the adult basic education program, essential skills for the workplace, still a relatively new program.

One of the stories I'd like to tell is, includes the Saskatchewan

Indian Institute of Technologies and the Lac La Ronge Indian Band partnership. It's a partnership, a program ran between August 22, 2011, and January 20, 2012. In the midst of this partnership, formal arrangements were made with employers to create a positive work experience, and work references were available for the 12 learners that completed their work placement. This ensured that not only were new skills developed but, importantly, self-esteem and confidence was gained as employment was undertaken both in training.

And what we saw — we had 12 learners — seven learners were able to secure full-time or part-time employment; three went on to further training and education, and two were looking for employment. The work placements took place at a number of local businesses: the A&W, Caroline's Elder Shelter, Fields Dollar Depot, the Keethanow Gas Bar, La Ronge Hotel & Suites, the Bargain store, MacGiver's Auto Centre, and North Mart.

And again what we're trying to demonstrate here is that there were a number of skills training initiatives. It includes some work and supports. For example transportation and lunch program, some child care, and some additional dollars to offer supports. This has worked out pretty well.

A second one, if I could, is Lakeland College and Onion Lake First Nations. There's a partnership between last February 22nd and June 30th of last year. Ten out of twelve graduates obtained employment. One withdrew early because of a job opportunity and one withdrew because of some difficulties that that person was having. We found out subsequently that that person went on to find a job.

Subsequent follow-up surveys in December of 2011 showed 80 per cent of the learners were still employed six months after the project. So on the student level . . . Not just about finding employment, but also sustaining that employment piece is something that we're looking for. And the learners were provided with an opportunity to attain a class 1A licence and some safety tickets as well as some other skills that were going to be especially valuable in and around the oil and gas industry. Very strong employer partnerships were formed with Flint Energy Services among others, and we saw this partnership again producing real results. These are just a couple of examples.

[20:30]

And again we continue to invest in this program where we just simply don't have the capacity. We don't have the presence like our partners do, in this case Lakeland College and SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies]. We just don't have a presence within these communities that's sufficient to actually be able to undertake these kind of activities. We're seeing real success and real results for people that are participating.

So Ted's kind of highlighted the system level, what the RFP grading and waiting looks like. And I've tried to highlight — there are many more stories — but just highlight a couple of examples where, in La Ronge in this instance and in and around Onion Lake and Lloydminster, we see real results. So hopefully on both sides, both on the student achievement and then on the

broader system question, we've been able to address some of those questions.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you for those examples. So far this evening we've talked about a few different topics. The one issue we've talked about is the issue of retirements and vacancies and how the right people are in the right jobs. We've talked a bit about process review and what sort of evaluations go on for what programs or offering should be there; and we've talked a bit about different partnerships with CBOs.

So I know those are a few different balls to have in the air. And yes, civil servants are very talented in doing their work, but is those changes, is this causing any sort of, any sort of examination or consideration of the overall structure of the ministry and how things are being done, or is it sort of using the same template that's been in place?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The question about the structure and function of the ministry is one that I've certainly been attentive to since we were first elected in 2007. And it's consistent with our vision of continuous improvement and striving for organizational excellence and empowerment from right across the ministry and within the ministry.

Certainly what I'll do is, I'll hand this to Deputy Isman just to walk through some of the objectives that we're mindful of when we think about, and again when we act on, kind of the continual refinement of the structure and function of the ministry. And Deputy Isman, why don't we just get you to walk through some of those principles and then some of the actions we've taken to try to embody the priorities we're putting on that spirit of excellence?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mentioned earlier about, you know, the work that we're doing in the ministry in terms of achieving organizational excellence and how we've worked inside the ministry in terms of doing that. And it really has been, over the last couple of years, very much a participative process led by our executive team but with lots of engagement of staff across the ministry.

We started talking about really what we wanted to achieve in terms of an organization and what excellence meant. And some of the objectives that we outlined through working with the staff was, first and foremost, to more effectively meet client needs and the desired outcomes, that we actually had more focused, effective, efficient citizen-centred services. When we talk about that, we need to make sure that we understand what the needs of our clients are and then make sure that the services and programs that we're providing actually meet the needs and that we aren't continuing to do what we've always done just because we've always done it that way.

We've also been very committed to enhancing employee satisfaction and engagement. I think part of organizational excellence is really about ensuring that our employees are driven, and that it really is grassroots up that reaches the success. They are the closest to the client. They know what the client needs. And they're most attuned to being able to then share with us where potentially we aren't meeting those needs or where we've got inefficiencies in the systems. So through employee engagement, we're actually working — and I'd say,

coming back to the context of your question — of making sure that the changes we're making are inspiring our employees, as opposed to challenging them. And they certainly have, from my perspective, stepped up to the plate in every regard.

One of our other objectives was to be clear on our core business, our purpose, and our accountabilities, once again coming back to ensure that we aren't doing things simply because we've always done them in the ministry, but always asking ourselves the question, is it the right thing to do? Are we doing it the right way?

We've worked hard as well in terms of building a culture of high performance, continuous improvement, and innovation. And once again some of that's through training that we've delivered to the staff, our ongoing staff meetings, making sure that we continuously talk about the values and the principles that are important in the organization and the value of being a public servant and what that means and entails. And that through all of this, the last objective is that we can enhance our ability to advise and respond to government direction so that we fully are meeting the goals of the public service.

Through some of that work as well we have worked hard to show the alignment in our ministry in terms of the integration of the work that we do to break down those silos, to ensure that employees understand where they fit. And when you look at our ministry plan, you can draw a direct line from the work that an individual is doing right through to the goals in our plan and the achievement of those goals. And as well, we structured the ministry in such a way that you can see opportunities for career development; we can hire entry-level people into the ministry and that they can actually see a natural progression in terms of the work that they're doing. And that certainly strengthens overall job satisfaction, you know, as best practices would certainly relate too.

The last couple of items with regard to, I think, some of the principles is that we broke down the silos that were in the ministry. Every time ministries go through changes, there is always that question about whether or not there is duplication and overlap in terms of what we're doing. And by effectively working horizontally across the ministry . . . And I think the contract example that I gave you earlier was certainly one where we saw that there was an overlap and a duplication, not by design, but simply because of a lack of knowing and understanding. So by setting up systems and process reviews, that's what we've been able to really achieve as the identification.

And by bringing the staff together to do that work, what became very exciting, certainly from a leader and manager's point of view, was to see their awareness grow because sometimes you simply don't know what's going on down the hall with one of your colleagues unless you actually go into a room and actually outline what the process looks like.

And once employees start to see that and the value of some of our process improvement initiatives has been, oh, well now I see why we should change it. And that in and of itself has really inspired a lot of the staff to simply do their work different and ask different kinds of questions, and as a result, deliver those services more effectively. It also ensures that we've got more

timely, accurate decision-making and that we don't get bottlenecked in terms of bureaucracy, which often large organizations can do. As well as that our structure is adaptable, flexible, and responsive in terms of meeting the needs of our partners and our stakeholders, and that we can actually meet their needs more effectively.

So overall I think, as a result of the initiative, what we have found is that the employees are engaged. They certainly are more aware of the ministry's plan, the work that we're doing, why the changes that are initiated are done. And all of it's linked back to them understanding their role, their outcomes, and the value and the contribution that they make overall to the success of the services provided by the ministry.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you for that answer. In listening to the response, there was some discussion about breaking down silos and trying to do things as efficiently and as effectively as possible. What's the minister's view on how this is affecting the types of services to clients, to Saskatchewan citizens? Is it changing the geographic locations where services are delivered, or what sort of changes? Can you give a few more specific examples of how this affects the services provided to clients, please?

[20:45]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. I think again the spirit of the question — and again this can be iterative; we'll go back and forth and get as much information as needed — but I think the spirit here is, you know, is the reach of the ministry expanding or contracting? Is it meeting the needs of communities? And it's an important question, especially given the fact that, you know, the population is 1.067 million and growing. It's a very, very important question. So I thought what we'd do is just use a few examples of where while we know there's more to do, while we've undertaken to work with our partners to provide more services and better services to people across the province, you know, first and foremost, I'll use an example.

Obviously in recent days in the paper there's been some emphasis put on immigration. We're pleased with the progress to date. One of the things that we've done is, in partnership with a number of entities right across the province, we've established 11 — in the course of the last couple of years — 11 newcomer gateways. And one of the things that I said right from the start is, explicitly, I wanted to see what our community partners could do within these 11 communities, with the knowledge that these gateways, these first-stop services for newcomers, that they also serve the surrounding community of about 150 kilometres each. So there's this continual engagement between the respective each communities, where they are, as well as a number of other communities, and we're seeing some interesting synergy.

But I said let's see what kind of partnership arrangements we can find rather than just having these embedded within the ministry. And so they're in Tisdale and Humboldt and Estevan and Swift Current and Yorkton and Moose Jaw and North Battleford and Lloydminster, Prince Albert, Regina, and Saskatoon. So the geographic reach actually expanded considerably.

And I'll use an example from Estevan where our partner is the Southeast Regional College. They're very highly respected. In fact in not too many days we're going to go out and we're going to actually do an opening of the new energy centre in Estevan. And what we were able to do is, by working with our partners — in this case in Estevan with the Southeast Regional College — we were able to invest new dollars, new dollars into the community, new dollars into settlement services through the gateway, again without expanding or enhancing the specific footprint of the ministry, which was really important for us.

And that's a model that we've used right across the province. There are any number of partners, and we can get that information. So there's one example where, I think geographically, we've actually expanded the reach of services but we haven't expanded the footprint of government. And in fact we think, and certainly the feedback we get is that these partnerships are working very, very well across the province.

Another one relates to some of the changes that we've made in the work that we do with some of our vocational college partners. And what we were doing was actually probably visiting and engaging some of these partners in ways that were eating up valuable dollars and resources on our side and probably taking up valuable time and resources on their side. So I'll get Deputy Isman to just highlight a little bit of ways that we found to enhance the service side. And I guess through both these, I'll come back and make a couple of concluding comments.

But Deputy Isman, why don't we just talk a little bit about the vocational schools and some of the efficiencies that we've been able to find in those partnerships.

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. So we mentioned that some of the process improvements that we made was to eliminate some of the duplication and get rid of some of the silos inside the ministry. So an example with regard to vocational schools where we actually have quite a significant regulatory role. So within the post-secondary education branch of the ministry, staff would go out to visit the schools and do the regulatory oversight that we needed to do. Concurrently we also have a role, with regard to student financial assistance, of designating those schools if the individuals are actually eligible for student loans. And what we found was that we also had staff from student financial assistance going out to the same schools to do another assessment with regard to whether or not they were eligible for student loans.

So through the process improvements we did in the ministry and by tracking our processes of how we were actually doing business, we identified it. We consolidated a team, and now they're going out to the school in one shot. They're doing the full review, therefore saving our ministry resources as well as saving time on the part of the individual school on the work that they need to do to meet our needs. And then we're able to actually provide the feedback back to them significantly quicker and with less resources.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Those are just a couple of examples. There are many others that we can make reference to. So I think, I hope that's answered the spirit of the question. The geographic reach of services continues to expand. But what

we're trying to do is find efficiencies that are beneficial (a) to the ministry and (b) most especially to our partners so that they can also focus on really their core activities and their core commitment, most often to our students in the case of these colleges or for our new neighbours in the case of the gateway program.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much for those responses. Moving on. Flipping the page to (AE01), under central management and services. In last year's Estimates on page 28, the central services line for 2011-12 was forecast at 11.920 million, but in this year's Estimates on page 30, the same budget line is listed as 11.815 million. Could you please explain the \$105,000 difference?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sorry, Mr. Chair. We're looking for clarification. My fault. I probably wrote that wrong, incorrectly. Could you just repeat that? I'm sorry to do that.

Mr. Broten: — No, that's no problem. In last year's Estimates on page 28, the central services line for 2011-12 was forecast at 11.920 million, but in this year's Estimates on page 30, the same budget line is listed at 11.815 million. I'm just curious why the difference.

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

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. If we refer to page 170 in the Estimates book, it actually is part of the restatement schedule, and that's actually what's changed. And so the difference is a transfer from the ministry to Executive Council for the government website maintenance for \$25,000. And then there was also a transfer to Finance that was for the accounts payable project and those FTEs for the 80,000. So it's a restatement of the number as a result of those changes.

Mr. Broten: — I guess I missed page 170 in my nighttime reading. I apologize. In this year's budget, page 30, central services is cut by 2.514 million from 11.815 million to 9.301 million. How is this being achieved?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. The bulk of those dollars — \$1.3 million — was transferred to the Saskatchewan educational leadership unit which is providing secretariat support for the task force that I referenced in my opening remarks, the task force which is focusing on closing the education and employment gap between Aboriginal peoples and others here in Saskatchewan. It's being led by Gary Merasty. What we did is we've called upon the services of the Saskatchewan educational leadership unit to help support the work of that task force. There are two other allotments that Deputy Isman will make specific reference to as they're more directed to the operations of the ministry itself. So on that, Ms. Deputy Isman.

[21:00]

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a bit of the netting out number, so depending on which of the lines you are looking at within the overall category of central management services. The 1.33 million was the majority of it that moved out. As well we actually had some money that was from the labour market

agreement administration funds that we had in the ministry for a project, a data project, that we were working on that was \$500,000 that was completed. There were also, we had centralized the savings with regard to the FTE savings into this subvote, and those savings were \$946,000. And then on the positive side, in terms of getting to the net change, there was also some accommodation increases, some recoveries in terms of our shared services of \$219,000, and then some funding increase with regard to our negotiated salary increases.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So the difference, some of it's accounted for by money that went out and isn't going out this time for labour market things, some for FTE differences because there are fewer FTEs, and then the lion's share is the 1.3 million to the task force. In general terms, not really detailed, but that 1.3 million for the task force, what's . . . How is that 1.3 million being spent?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure. If I could . . . Just to make sure I understand. Essentially the service is being provided by SELU [Saskatchewan Education Leadership Unit] and we'll just get you a breakdown of that right away.

Mr. Broten: — Yes. Yes.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much for the question and we're happy to come back again with more details on this. But you know, the task force I've identified, Gary Merasty who is vice-president of social responsibility at Cameco; the other two members, Rita Bouvier of Saskatoon who is internationally renowned for her work with indigenous people; as well as Don Hoiium, the executive director of the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents of Saskatchewan or LEADS. So three very highly qualified and credible individuals that we're very pleased.

The question regarding the support to SELU and to the task force, more broadly. This range is kind of a continuum of services from research to public meetings, the per diems, the need for transportation, we certainly have made allowance for and want the task force to be in and around communities right across the province. And then, as I have said, some of the research assistants as well that goes along with providing a secretariat services. So there's a bit of a snapshot. I'm happy to get more detail, but hopefully that essentially these funds are meant to enable the success of the task force.

Mr. Broten: — How many public meetings does the minister expect through this process?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The task force is actually in the midst of doing its work plan. And, if I'm not mistaken here, within about the next 10 days it's going to be meeting with the ministry and representatives from the other two ministries and actually presenting its first draft of the work plan. So within days we can get that information to the committee members.

Mr. Broten: — A bit of a breakdown of the 1.3 would be interesting to me.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure.

Mr. Broten: — Since we're on the topic of the task force, what

is the minister's desired outcome with respect to the product that is produced through the process?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much for the question. There is going to be a report and it will be available publicly. And what we're really looking for here in the spirit of some of the things that — and again we know there's more work to do — but in the spirit of just some of the advancements that we've been able to see especially through the hard work of our partners and good work of our partners. So this is meant to really focus on very tangible, practical ways to help ensure that we are eliminating the education and employment gap. So you know, what we want are action-oriented recommendations and suggestions from the committee.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. In earlier remarks the minister said that there's a meeting with the task force coming up in the near future where a draft of the work plan will be provided. After the draft is provided, what type of fine tuning may occur? Well I assume fine tuning may occur, may not occur; maybe it'll be good to go. When will the plan and details of the rollout be made public?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — To help foster and facilitate engagement as well as transparency and accountability, one of the first items is, you know, they're going to be coming forward with their own website. And so, you know, we anticipate again within the category of, if not days, kind of weeks that we'll see that, and it'll be open and accessible to people across the province. Then as the public meetings are rolling out, they'll roll out in the due course, you know, through a variety of means including through the website.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Does the minister expect the \$1.3 million to be exhausted? Will the task force require all of that funding?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Certainly based on our budgeting, we anticipate that that's the case.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. It's a significant amount of funding, so I'm just curious what the number of meetings and all that will look like. Maybe that's the going rate for a task force these days, but I understand the plan is in the works so I look forward to seeing the plan.

The funding allotted for accommodation services — this is back under (AE01) — is going up 21 per cent from 5,711,000 to 6,896,000 in this year's budget. The same amount did not increase between 2010-11 budget and the 2011-12 budget. So wondering if the minister could please provide a bit of information why 21 per cent more will be spent on accommodation services this year.

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

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. There's actually several reasons in terms of the increase, and it starts with our current space on Hamilton Street. We were in a long-term lease, and that lease is up during this fiscal year. So as a result, lease rates are going up significantly.

As a result of that, Government Services has identified the part of our ministry that's located on Hamilton Street to move from the current building to Hill Tower III. And in moving to Hill Tower III, one of the things that we will be doing is actually taking a smaller footprint in terms of the space to meet our needs by working in the required square footage that is allocated on the government standards, which we actually don't have in the current building. So we will have less space that we are utilizing, but as a result of the long-term lease, the actual lease costs are going up.

[21:15]

Mr. Broten: — What component of the ministry will be moving from . . . The Hamilton location is the Delta? Not the Delta. Which location is the Hamilton location, please?

Ms. Isman: — We're actually in Grenfell Tower. Sorry. Yes.

Mr. Broten: — So what component of the ministry is moving from that location to the new spot?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Everyone that's currently in Grenfell Tower. So it predominantly houses, actually the vast majority of the ministry — everyone in Regina, other than our career and employment services office and our student financial assistance office, which are on Broad Street and on Hillsdale. The rest of the ministry is located currently in the Grenfell Building.

Mr. Broten: — Is the space, the Grenfell space . . . Now when the ministry vacates that area, is the space being renewed by another ministry or is government packing up there and moving somewhere else?

Ms. Isman: — I'm afraid I don't know. Government Services is responsible for allocating space to ministries as to who's going where and renewing lease agreements, so I'm not sure what their plans are with regard to the space that we're currently in.

Mr. Broten: — You said the lease is now up at that Grenfell location, or it's been renewed?

Ms. Isman: — Or at least it's up in September. Yes, I'm not sure of the exact date but within the current fiscal year, it is up.

Mr. Broten: — And so part of the increase, the 20 per cent-ish increase, is because lease rates have gone up? Is that the correct understanding?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think generally speaking we would appreciate that lease costs are going up but the specific details with regard to that, we don't have those details. The Ministry of Government Services would have them.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So the lease is coming up in the fall, I think I heard, and then at some point the ministry will be leaving the Grenfell location and moving to the Hill Tower. I have the correct understanding there?

Ms. Isman: — That's correct.

Mr. Broten: — What's the estimated date when the Hill Tower location will be ready?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. We anticipate early to mid-autumn is when we'll be moving.

Mr. Broten: — Early to mid-autumn moving from Grenfell to the new location.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — And that'll coincide at the same time as the lease expires, as you said, which was September?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes. This is always a, you know, this is always a bit of a staging and phasing issue that you have to work through. But yes, they'll be coordinated.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So there will not be a renewal of the lease at Grenfell, at the Grenfell location?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well as far as the specifics, I think, probably given the significance of Government Services, that ministry's in a more authoritative position to talk about what happens from there. It's kind of outside the purview of our operations.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So yes, I appreciate that Government Services handles the leasing and building and that sort of thing, but the accommodation expense comes out of the ministry of Advanced Ed's budget, right?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So the 20 per cent increase in this line item for one year to the next, is that exclusively for differences in the lease rates between the two locations?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The accommodation costs in that line are actually all-inclusive of all the space that the ministry has. So the increase may not be solely related to the space that we have currently at Grenfell, but would be in totality. So if there are also incremental increases in all the other space across the province, they would be included in that increased number as well.

Mr. Broten: — So the 21 per cent is the total of the lease increases across the properties that the ministry occupies.

Ms. Isman: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — I know it's not Government Services policy; I've heard Minister Ross in committee talk about not giving out the details of the figures, but can a list of the locations that this money represents for leasing be provided to the committee? I'm not asking for specific lease rates for office space, but what are the locations that make up this line, please.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Just to be clear, addresses? Is that sufficient?

Mr. Broten: — Yes. I'm just curious how many buildings and . . . I'm curious where this 21 per cent increase happened.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Sure.

Mr. Broten: — In some places maybe the increase has been a few percentage points here and there, but I'm curious if there's a certain location that is expected to be greatly more expensive than where you folks currently are.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Okay. Thank you. Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. Kind of two components to the question. Thought we'd do is just highlight where our locations are. It won't take long to do that. And then I'll have Deputy Isman kind of comment on the second part of the question and probably the referral to Government Services. But we'll just begin with the list of where our kind of centres are.

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I'll just go slowly through the list. It's Air Ronge, Creighton, Estevan, Fort Qu'Appelle, Humboldt, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Kindersley, Lloydminster, La Ronge, Meadow Lake, Melfort, Moose Jaw, Nipawin, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Regina, Swift Current, Saskatoon, Weyburn, and Yorkton.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. So just to be clear, that represents the spaces leased by the ministry for the 6.896 million for 2012-13?

Ms. Isman: — For the full accommodation costs, yes.

Mr. Broten: — Full accommodation costs, okay. Thank you. Could the minister now please provide me — on the same page, on 30 — for the amount for 2011-12, which was 5.711 million, could the minister please provide the same listing for the properties that that sum represented.

[21:30]

Ms. Isman: — Mr. Chair, there weren't any changes in the offices over the course of the last two years. So the list would be identical.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. The minister already provided me with the information about the Grenfell location with the lease being up. Were there any other instances between those two lists which the deputy has just said were carbon copies, the same properties? Were there any other changes or renewals to the leases of the properties over this two-year period of time beyond the Grenfell location, please?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. If we can, what we'd like to do is submit that information just to the committee. We want to go back and just double-check given the number of properties, and it's not uncommon for different lease arrangements to come up and to be renegotiated. So if that would be okay for the next meeting, or here in the next couple days, we can have that submitted to the committee members if that suits you, Mr. Chair, and the committee members.

Mr. Broten: — So there were no . . . And if you don't have the information available right now, a day or two from now will have to do. But I'm curious here. Just to be clear, there were no location moves and no dropping of properties between the two fiscal years represented on page 30, right? So that the list of properties for the one location is the same, for the one year, is

the same as the next year. The DM [deputy minister] very clearly said that, right?

Ms. Isman: — Just as a point of clarification, we moved into the new space for student financial assistance on Hillsdale Avenue in the course of '11-12. But it was already on the list the previous year because we had already negotiated the lease and made the changes to move.

Mr. Broten: — So you hadn't yet technically moved, but you knew how much you were going to be paying, therefore the amount represented in that year was the accurate amount of what the lease or the rent payment would be.

Ms. Isman: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — That was a yes? And by the same logic, that's how we arrive, by the same logic, is that how the ministry arrives at the amount for 2012-13 with respect to Hill Tower III? The move has not occurred, but the lease rate is known at this time?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The lease agreements are all negotiated by Government Services, and what Government Services provides us is the cost of the space required for the ministry. So the dollars that are allocated within our ministry budget are the dollars that are provided to us directly by Government Services.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So the amount is negotiated and determined by Government Services, and Government Services transfers the amount that is required to make those payments into the ministry's budget? Or did I mishear that, pardon me.

Ms. Isman: — They simply tell us what the amount is that's required. And then that money is provided to us in the budget process and is then identified in our vote.

Mr. Broten: — So basically you're told what the rent of the lease is, and then therefore you budget for whatever you're told to put in there?

Ms. Isman: — Correct.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Thank you. And so the amount for Hill Tower III, the minister provided an estimated move date of mid- to late-autumn or something like that. So for fiscal calculations . . . Fiscal ends end of March right, fiscal year? So that would be increased expenses incurred for Hill Tower III would be from the date of mid-autumn to the end of March. That would be about a six- to seven-month window, correct?

Ms. Isman: — I just want to check the numbers.

Mr. Broten: — Just before you confer, so the amount that Government Services, as the DM just said, which the Government Services tells the ministry how much they need to budget for accommodation, the amount that the Ministry of Advanced Ed was told to budget for Hill Tower III accommodation would have been for a six- to seven-month window, if the estimated move date is in fact around that autumn mark?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. So as the minister identified, it could be early to mid-autumn that we're moving. So it could be potentially any time as early as August and then could be staggered through that time. But the calculations, in terms of what Government Services would have provided, would have been based on the estimates of part of the year being in Grenfell Tower and part of the year being in Hill Tower III.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. And earlier on I believe I heard the deputy say that the actual footprint that the ministry will be occupying in Hill Tower III compared to Grenfell is smaller. Is that correct?

Ms. Isman: — That is correct.

Mr. Broten: — How's the footprint calculated? Is it square footage per FTE, or what determines . . . What unit is used, please?

[21:45]

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The space standards are established by Government Services. We don't actually have the details of what the space standards are specifically, but the space that they've allocated to us are based on the government-established space standards.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. So are we . . . How much is this footprint shrinking by going from Grenfell to Hill Tower III?

Ms. Isman: — I'm sorry, we don't have the details. Government Services would actually have the details.

Mr. Broten: — In the briefings, do you have any idea? I don't need a specific number, but is it by a quarter, by a third, by half?

Ms. Isman: — We don't have the information. Government Services will have it.

Mr. Broten: — But the ministry absolutely knows that the footprint, the actual amount of space is smaller, correct?

Ms. Isman: — Yes. That's what Government Services advised us, was that the footprint space that we were moving into is less than what we currently have at Grenfell. That's the level of detail that we have.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. And going back to the list between the two fiscal years, the same properties are on the two lists. They're the same properties. There may have been a lease renewal or something for a few of the properties, one or more of the properties, which the ministry will provide at a later date, correct?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Yes, what we'll be able to do is just provide an update on lease renewals. As I say, given the number of properties in the number centres, we'll be able to get into some, just into some of those that were renewed.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. And out of the properties you've listed where AE [Advanced Education] has space, would it be fair to

say Regina, being the capital and one of the two largest cities in the province, that would be one of the larger spaces leased out of this list? Regina, Saskatoon, would those be the two largest locations where there are leased properties?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Regina would be the largest because they have the largest number of staff here, and Saskatoon would be second.

Mr. Broten: — So I realize you don't have the exact numbers in front of you because you pledged to provide them in the next day or so with respect to locations and lease details for each location. But is it safe to say, in the minister's view, that the Regina component for lease cost here would represent a sizeable amount of the total amount?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The ministry's able to provide the lease locations and the renewal and the differences between the two years of the lease locations if they change between the two years. I think any other information would have to be confirmed with Government Services.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. But we've confirmed that the totals, the amounts for all of these buildings listed by the DM earlier on, it was confirmed that the totals for each location, that figure is given by Government Services, right?

Ms. Isman: — The dollar value, how much we're paying for the leases?

Mr. Broten: — Yes. Thank you.

Ms. Isman: — Yes, that's all provided to us from Government Services.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Does the Ministry of Advanced Education know how long of a lease they are, as you're doing the planning . . . Earlier on in the night we were talking about structural or the planning for the ministry and what's going to happen. I assume buildings are taken into consideration when such planning occurs. Does the ministry know how long of a lease, how long the lease is for the new Hill Tower III location? Is this a forever home, a five-year home, a twenty-year home? How long?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just checked with the officials and the information hasn't been shared with the ministry.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. For the other properties listed, for the list here that was provided by the deputy minister, what is the standard protocol for the length of a lease for those buildings?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you. The officials have advised it varies in terms of the lease arrangements. But once again, the details of the lease arrangements aren't shared at that level of detail from Government Services to the ministry.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. But I would assume if you're going to the effort of moving buildings, moving . . . How many employees would work in the Grenfell location? How many FTEs? About.

Ms. Isman: — Sorry, I had to add up the numbers. It's about 160.

Mr. Broten: — One hundred and sixty, okay. So if you're moving 160 employees, that's likely not a six-month or a one-year or even a three-year plan. That's a fairly significant move. So I would assume as the ministry's planning its organizational charts and such, there'd be a view that this might be a location where the ministry resides in Hill Tower III for some time.

Ms. Isman: — We don't know the terms of the lease that were negotiated by Government Services. So I can't speak to the specifics of the lease agreement.

Mr. Broten: — But surely as the ministry is planning the ministry knows, whether they're in a building in Yorkton, Melfort, North Battleford, P.A. [Prince Albert], Regina, Estevan, whether they're there for three months, six months, two years, or longer. You must have some sort of idea about how long you'll be in this location. No?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the best frame in terms of the potential time frame in the new space would be based on our past experience. And based on that experience, we would expect to be in this space for some time.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. One hundred and sixty employees about at the Regina location being moved to Hill Tower III. Is that correct?

Ms. Isman: — Approximately, yes.

Mr. Broten: — Where are the moving expenses in the budget for this move? Is this included in this budget line item, or are the moving expenses somewhere else and how much are they?

[22:00]

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The moving expenses are budgeted in the Ministry of Government Services, and we don't know what has been budgeted or allocated for the move.

Mr. Broten: — Does the ministry offset those expenses? Do they transfer funds to Government Services for moving, or is that simply within the standard Government Services budget?

Ms. Isman: — It would be in the Government Services budget.

Mr. Broten: — For a move of this nature as . . . To the minister, but realizing that there's a deputy minister with broad experience in the public service, for a move of this size, what would the normal moving expenses be to relocate 160 people, about, from one location to another? What would the normal expected expense be for that type of move?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I actually don't have any experience in this area with regard to moving expenses, and I don't know.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Thanks. But there'll most certainly be moving expenses, right? It's not being done for free.

Ms. Isman: — Yes, there will be moving expenses and they are within the budget of Government Services.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you. Will there be . . . This is moving into a new build, right, from Grenfell to Hill Tower III?

Ms. Isman: — Yes.

Mr. Broten: — When you move into an older building, I don't know the details of how this works, but sometimes there's leasehold improvements. Are those types of things factored into this move or would those not be applicable in this situation?

Ms. Isman: — With regard to the leasehold improvements, once again the details and the budget are in Government Services, and that information hasn't been provided to the ministry.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Is it practice with builds like this, when one side signs on to the lease and gets the space, do they just get the shell and then it's up to the group leasing, the lessee, to build the guts, so to speak, the interior? Is that how it normally works with leasing this type of building?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Government Services is in charge of the overall contract and the contracting of the services that need to be provided. But they consult with the ministry in terms of what our needs are to meet the business needs of the ministry, as well as our ability to meet the needs of the clients. So that's the input that we currently have with regard to the configuration of the space to meet those needs.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. For the cost associated with the configuration of the space, the DM earlier on said that Government Services negotiates the leases, finds out how much they are. That amount is given to the Ministry of Advanced Ed and then that determines the budget line for how much it costs for accommodation.

For improvements to the building, for leaseholds for the building of the insides and whatever it needs to look like and function as, is that expense the expense associated with that? Is that something that Government Services pays or do they simply negotiate it, organize it in consultation with the ministry? Do they find out how much that is and then give it to the Ministry of Advanced Ed to pay? My question is: will the Ministry of Advanced Education be paying for the leasehold improvements that occur within the building?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you. All of those costs are within the purview of Government Services and are included in their budget.

Mr. Broten: — In their budget, so they pay for the leasehold improvements.

Ms. Isman: — Yes, that's correct.

[22:15]

Mr. Broten: — But it is very clear that if there are expenses associated with leasehold improvements, that's over and beyond the amount that the Ministry of Advanced Education

would be paying for the lease, correct? Just to clarify, so the final total for the space that AE would be moving into — in this case in Hill Tower III — the final total, would it necessarily be represented in the dollar amount that the ministry is paying because there would also be expenses paid by Government Services for any leasehold improvements. Is that correct?

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Government Services negotiated the terms and conditions of the lease, and those details haven't been shared with the ministry. So we don't have that level of information. And as well we don't have a budget line item in our budget with regard to leasehold improvements.

Mr. Broten: — Which means it's not there? Or which means that the bills still might be coming in the mail, so to speak?

Ms. Isman: — No, the amount of money that's in our budget is what Government Services has advised us and allocated to us with regard to the accommodation costs.

Mr. Broten: — So is the ministry expecting an additional request for payment with respect to leasehold improvements, or will this be the total amount that the ministry pays for this space for this fiscal year?

Ms. Isman: — This would be the total amount for the space for the fiscal year.

Mr. Broten: — And it's possible however though that Government Services, if they've negotiated the details, they may be incurring the expenses associated with leasehold improvements. Or would that be built into the costs that the ministry's already paying?

Ms. Isman: — Those are the details that we don't have and are best referred to Government Services in terms of the details.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. In negotiations and discussions with Government Services as the planning occurs, does the ministry know if other ministries are moving in alongside AEE [Advanced Education, Employment] to Hill Tower III, or will AEE be the only government ministry in the building?

Ms. Isman: — We don't know if anyone else is moving in other than Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

Mr. Broten: — Really?

Ms. Isman: — Really.

Mr. Broten: — But it's possible other ministries are moving in as well?

Ms. Isman: — I'm afraid I don't know.

Mr. Broten: — Well surely items like this are discussed around the cabinet table or around tables with DMs when you're doing planning and organizational charts and all sorts of discussions. I just find that quite surprising that no one, that none of the officials, and with chatter that goes on between ministries, that no one in this room can tell me if other ministries are moving into this building or not. Could we poll everyone in the room if

they know? Because surely someone must know if other ministries are moving into this building.

Ms. Isman: — Mr. Chair, we've checked. We don't know.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, that's fine.

Ms. Isman: — It may be there. It may be. But I don't know.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. I apologize for my tone in the last question. And if other ministries were moving in though, that would show up in their, the ministry's own accommodation budget lines, correct? As it does for AEE?

Ms. Isman: — In looking at, I mean the details of our budget, we know the details that are there, but we actually don't know the details of what's in other ministries' budgets.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you very much. So looking at this issue, we've got (AE01), accommodation services. What we know is that in this fiscal year that line item, an amount of \$6.896 million represents the lease payments that the ministry must pay, according to Government Services, for locations in Air Ronge, Creighton, Estevan, Fort Qu'Appelle, Humboldt, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Kindersley, Lloydminster, La Ronge, Meadow Lake, Melfort, Moose Jaw, Nipawin, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Regina, Swift Current, Saskatoon, Weyburn, and Yorkton. We know that for the previous fiscal year it was the exact same facilities. There may have been a lease renewal or two within that group. The ministry doesn't have that information as its disposal right now.

But we know that the most significant change as identified by the ministry is the relocation of the Regina offices, about 160 FTEs, from the Grenfell location to Hill Tower III. We know that this is actually a smaller amount of space, it's a smaller footprint, but we know that the total budget amount between the two years is a 21 per cent increase, a difference of \$1.185 million. We know that there may be moving expenses that Government Services has to pay. There may be leasehold improvement expenses that may or may not be coming. They may be included; we don't know. And we expected this to be a long-term move, a long-term lease, given the magnitude of the move into the building.

So something between those two years, those two fiscal years, has to account for the almost \$1.2 million. Based on the information we have right now, the most significant change is the relocation from Grenfell to Hill Tower III. And we know that the change is a six-month-about expense, based on the estimated moving dates of some time in autumn to the end of the fiscal. So on a 12-month basis, it could actually be double that, I would assume. It doesn't sound very lean to me. Is the ministry fine with paying this additional expense? Actually, Mr. Chair . . .

The Chair: — Yes.

[22:30]

Mr. Broten: — After this response I see it's 10:30, so I would call the clock once the minister has a chance to respond.

Ms. Isman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just in running through the description and the analysis, I think we would expect that it isn't quite complete in terms of the overall analysis of getting to that conclusion. So I'm not sure that we would get to the same conclusion.

Mr. Broten: — Okay. Well being the time that it is, we've reached the normal time of adjournment, so I would thank the minister and all the officials for their time this evening and thank other committee members. Thank you so much.

The Chair: — And if the minister has closing remarks.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And to the committee members, I'd like to echo that note of appreciation especially for our officials, as well as those that work here in the Legislative Building that allow us to do our work. And I know many people have been here tonight and that means time away from family and other activities. So I'm sure I'll be joined by all the committee members and you, Mr. Chair, to say thanks very much for the work of those from the Legislative Assembly, as well as from those from the ministry for their time and energies tonight.

The Chair: — Thank you, one and all. Being the hour past 10:30, we will adjourn and we will meet again tomorrow, Thursday, April 26th at 1:15. Sleep well.

[The committee adjourned at 22:33.]