



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. Greg Lawrence, Chair
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Mr. David Forbes, Deputy Chair
Saskatoon Centre

Mr. Russ Marchuk
Regina Douglas Park

Mr. Roger Parent
Saskatoon Meewasin

Mr. Corey Tochor
Saskatoon Eastview

Hon. Nadine Wilson
Saskatchewan Rivers

Ms. Colleen Young
Lloydminster

[The committee met at 14:57.]

The Chair: — Good afternoon. I'd like to introduce the members of the committee. We have Mr. Warren McCall sitting in for Mr. Forbes. We have Mr. Marchuk, Mr. Parent, and Mr. Tochor and Ms. Young.

**General Revenue Fund
Advanced Education
Vote 37**

Subvote (AE01)

The Chair: — We will be considering the estimates and supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education. We now begin our consideration of vote 37 and vote 169, Advanced Education, subvote (AE01). Minister Doherty is here with his officials. Minister, please introduce your officials and make your opening remarks. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to my colleagues on the committee for the opportunity to be here this afternoon and discuss the spending estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education for 2015-16.

Before I begin my comments, Mr. Chair, I'd like to take just a few minutes to introduce officials that have joined me, not all of the officials but some of them that are here this afternoon: Dr. Louise Greenberg, the deputy minister of Advanced Education, sitting to my left, your right; Ms. Tammy Bloor Cavers, the assistant deputy minister of sector relations and student services, sitting to my right; Scott Giroux, executive director, corporate finance, sitting beside the deputy minister; Ann Lorenzen, executive director, universities and private vocational schools branch, seated behind me; Mike Pestill, executive director, technical and trades branch, seated behind me; and Elissa Aitken, executive director, student services and program development branch, also seated behind me. Several other ministry officials are here, Mr. Chair, that if needed to be called upon to come up and speak, we'll certainly provide their names for the committee and for Hansard.

Mr. Chair, if I could just make a few introductory comments before we get into questions, I'd appreciate that. This 2015-16 budget will help keep Saskatchewan strong by investing in post-secondary educational institutions and supports for students. Over the past eight years, our government has made it a priority to support post-secondary educational institutions and students, and this year's budget continues that strong commitment while ensuring the budget is balanced and without raising taxes for Saskatchewan people.

These priorities are reflected in the operations plan and the budget for the Ministry of Advanced Education. The Ministry of Advanced Education's 2015-16 budget is approximately \$783 million. So with that in mind, I would like to highlight several spending priorities.

[15:00]

Mr. Chair, the total funding transfers to post-secondary educational institutions is \$708 million in 2015-16. This

includes operating, capital, and targeted program funding. Operating funding to technical institutes and federated colleges will increase by 2 per cent. Operating funding to the University of Regina, affiliated colleges, and regional colleges will increase by 1 per cent. The University of Saskatchewan, the U of S, will get a 1 per cent increase to their operating base funding, but due to significant operating savings accumulated at the University of Saskatchewan, the provincial budget will reduce the total operating grant to the University of Saskatchewan by \$14.7 million net as a one-time fiscal restraint measure. This decision was made in co-operation with the University of Saskatchewan and they have confirmed they have the operating savings in place to manage this reduction without affecting services for students.

This 2015-16 budget provides \$46.6 million for infrastructure to help ensure Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions continue to meet the challenges of growth and accommodate the needs of students. Mr. Chair, this is a 43 per cent increase over '14-15 funds for infrastructure and a 68 per cent increase over 2007 funding levels. In fact since 2007-08, the provincial government has provided \$477.5 million in capital funding to post-secondary institutions.

We are also providing capital funding for several major projects over the next year that will provide more opportunities for students and help to meet the province's labour market needs. Highlights of capital projects receiving funding in 2015-16 include: \$10.6 million for renovation and expansion of the Southeast College in Weyburn, \$7.9 million for the Health Sciences facility at the University of Saskatchewan, and 4.5 million for the new Parkland College Trades and Technology Centre in Yorkton.

Mr. Chair, we are making a significant investment in the preventive maintenance and renewal, or PMR: \$23.6 million this year, which is a 14.6 per cent increase over last year, to assist post-secondary institutions to make necessary repairs to their facilities and to replace equipment. These are important projects that will help the province to increase its capacity to train and develop a skilled workforce.

Other budget initiatives include \$200,000 to support the first year of operations at the Parkland's Trades and Technology Centre and \$412,000 for expanded Internet bandwidth at our regional colleges.

As well, Mr. Chair, the budget provides an additional \$2.5 million to fulfill the government's commitment for more medical training seats in three separate areas. The 2015-16 budget continues funding 40 additional medical undergraduate seats to bring that total to 100; 60 medical residency seats to bring that total to 120; and 20 additional nurse practitioner seats to bring that total to 40. The budget also provides continued funding for 690 nursing training seats in the province and, Mr. Chair, we have fulfilled our commitment to increase nursing education training seats by 300.

The government's strong commitment to students continues through an array of support programs. I'd like to provide some detail on the measures we are taking to ensure that post-secondary education is accessible and affordable for

students. Since 2007-08 this government has paid out \$200 million to 58,000 post-secondary graduates who are taking advantage of the graduate retention program. For the 2015 tax year we will provide \$88.1 million in non-refundable tax credits for the graduate retention program. And for those Saskatchewan residents who have young children who will be future post-secondary students, we have budgeted 6.5 million to help families save for their children's education through the Saskatchewan advantage grant for education savings.

We have invested heavily in an array of supports for students. In 2007-08 only \$31 million was provided to support students. This year, Mr. Chair, financial supports for students will be almost \$142 million in total, which is \$110 million more in 2015-16 than in 2007-08, a 361 per cent increase. This includes \$32.5 million earmarked to support grants and bursaries through the student loan program and 14.5 million in scholarships including the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship.

And, Mr. Chair, we are seeing positive results from our investments in post-secondary education, and that success extends to First Nations and Métis students. There are over 16,000 First Nations and Métis learners enrolled at post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan, a 29 per cent increase in enrolment for First Nations and Métis students since 2007-08.

Since 2008, increasing numbers of First Nations and Métis students are succeeding. There are 3,500 more First Nations and Métis graduates with a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree in our labour force.

Our government recognizes the importance of supporting First Nations and Métis students so that they succeed. This budget provides additional operating support to our Aboriginal post-secondary institutions, including First Nations University, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, Gabriel Dumont Institute, and the Dumont Technical Institute.

In fact we are providing \$20.2 million in direct support for First Nations and Métis post-secondary education, including \$428,000 in additional operating funding for the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies or SIIT, an increase of 24 per cent year over year and 121 per cent since 2007; an additional \$75,000 in operating funding for the First Nations University of Canada, an increase of 2 per cent over last year and 60 per cent since 2007; \$61,000 in additional operating funding for Gabriel Dumont Institute, an increase of 1 per cent over last year and 44 per cent since 2007; and \$40,000 in additional operating funding for the Dumont Technical Institute, DTI, an increase of 2 per cent over last year and a 169 per cent increase since 2007; and \$34,000 in additional operating funding for the northern teacher education program, Northern Professional Access College — or NORTEP, NORPAC — an increase of 1 per cent over last year and 42 per cent since 2007.

Together with the Ministry of the Economy, direct expenditures for training institutions and programs for First Nations and Métis people is almost \$51 million in this year's budget. Our post-secondary institutions are leaders in providing more inclusive and effective programming for First Nations and Métis people. Mr. Chair, we recognize there is more work to do, but I believe the direct investments we have made demonstrate

our unwavering commitment to improving educational outcomes for First Nations and Métis people.

I want to take a moment to thank all of our partners in the post-secondary sector for their commitment to excellence and quality programs. The post-secondary institutions work collaboratively with each other and with industry in Saskatchewan. Together we are supporting students on their paths to success.

The population of our great province is at an all-time high, and a great number of those people are students who are choosing to stay in Saskatchewan to live, to work, and to raise their families. Others are international students who are choosing to make Saskatchewan their home after graduation from a post-secondary institution. And, Mr. Chair, we are proud to help move Saskatchewan forward and keep our province strong. With this budget, we are meeting the challenges of our growing province by investing in post-secondary education and ensuring education is accessible and affordable for our students.

I thank you, Mr. Chair, and I welcome questions from committee members.

The Chair: — Mr. McCall, you have the floor.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Minister, deputy minister, officials. Welcome to estimates, the first two hours of the three I believe we've got scheduled. Thank you for joining us today so we can partake of this vital exercise of accountability in terms of the dollars under consideration here today.

As those who've been around this table with me before will know, I'd like to go through the overall subvotes before we get into a specific thematic discussion of what's on offer. It usually provides a good net for catching things that maybe aren't as well highlighted as they could be.

So in terms of (AE01), in terms of the overall subvote, if the minister or deputy minister or officials could talk about what's under consideration there with the slight increase for the line item.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll ask the deputy minister to address each one of those specific questions from the hon. member as we go through the subvote.

Ms. Greenberg: — Pertaining to (AE01), central management and services, the increase of \$280,000, which is a 1.9 per cent increase, is attributable to a few things. First there's a \$412,000 increase to support increased bandwidth to regional college data lines. Second there's a \$90,000 salary increment increase, and this is offset by a savings in 214,000, which is a reduction for ministry accommodations due to reduced lease costs.

Mr. McCall: — Reduced lease costs. The lease was up for renewal or a change of venue. What happened there, Madam Deputy Minister?

Ms. Greenberg: — It's the reduced lease costs to the Ministry of Central Services.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the freeze that was ordered earlier in the year, how did that impact the out-of-scope members of Advanced Education? And what was the dollar savings achieved through that freeze?

Ms. Greenberg: — In terms of positions, the number of positions that weren't filled, there were nine positions that were not filled during the course of this salary freeze in our ministry. The salary freeze, I don't have the total summary of the salary freeze. It would have been about \$1.4 million for the total salaries for these just over 10 positions.

Mr. McCall: — So the application of the directive for a freeze amounted to not filling positions in the Ministry of Advanced Education. Am I understanding that correctly?

Ms. Greenberg: — I should clarify. This is for all positions in the ministry. Are you talking about out-of-scope versus in-scope?

Mr. McCall: — My understanding was the Premier directed out-of-scope employees to have a salary freeze, and my understanding was that proceeded a pace.

Ms. Greenberg: — I gave you information that actually pertained to vacancies. So the information that we had was for vacancies, the initial one. By the salary freeze, for out-of-scope would be about 20 to \$25,000 in savings.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the overall FTE [full-time equivalent] complement of the ministry, it's a flat line at 143.9 previous year to this. How do the nine positions that you've referenced figure into that state of affairs?

Ms. Greenberg: — Those nine positions are included in the 143.9. We had no change between '14-15 to '15-16.

Mr. McCall: — You're a patient public official, so you're well suited for trying to explain this for me. So given that it's flatlined at 143.9, you've referenced nine positions that have gone unfilled. Again you know, 143.9 minus 9 would indicate that they've probably been made up somewhere else. Is that the case?

Ms. Greenberg: — So we have 143.9 FTEs. Of these, nine are vacant that we haven't filled at this time.

Mr. McCall: — But they're still budgeted for in the documents we have before us here today.

Ms. Greenberg: — Yes.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. So again the figure involved in that is 1.4, if I'm recalling the earlier answer correctly, or what's involved in that?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — So if I could, Mr. Chair, I think . . .

Mr. McCall: — Yes please.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — So the positions, the FTEs were budgeted for in the budget process. And then when the Premier announced both the wage freeze and the hiring freeze, there

were nine vacant positions within those FTEs that have not been filled. Now during the course of this fiscal year if the hiring freeze comes off, those FTEs exist that the deputy minister and/or senior management will fill those positions.

Mr. McCall: — Put another way, the savings aren't then reflected in the numbers that we have here. Just the wage freeze right?

Ms. Greenberg: — That's right. I need to clarify because I misunderstood the question that you were asking. The \$1.4 million I was referring to, those are the salaries for senior management. So that would be out-of-scope level, out-of-scope 10 and above. So that's our total salaries.

[15:15]

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for the clarification. In terms of the division between out-of-scope, in-scope, where does it currently sit with Advanced Education?

Ms. Greenberg: — We don't have the breakdown of how many out-of-scope are in our ministry versus in-scope with us, but I could base it on that most of our positions are in-scope.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that undertaking, Madam Deputy Minister, Mr. Minister. In terms of I guess, moving from . . . that's Central Service's perspective. And tomorrow I have other questions certainly under the other subvotes, but are there any ministry-wide reviews being anticipated or considered around the work around higher education quality council, quality assurance council, and the expanding of degree-granting powers? Or are there anything, any reviews, any strategic planning work that the ministry is anticipating on a sector-wide basis in the days to come?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Let me just clarify, Mr. McCall. So when you say review, so the Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board exists today, SHEQAB, is doing some work on behalf of the ministry. When you say review, are we reviewing the effectiveness of their work? I'm not exactly clear what you mean by reviewing programs like that.

Mr. McCall: — Inasmuch as there was work undertaken that put forward a report that's provided the sort of go-forward plan for SHEQAB. And I guess I just cite that as an example, as a for instance. Is there any sort of review work being contemplated at this time by the ministry that would be going on a sector-wide basis?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — I think that's a very general, broad question. I think that it's fair to say that we are constantly doing program review, with respect to programs that are offered by the ministry, to ensure that they're meeting the needs of our sector partners, whether that's at the institutional level or the students that we provide services for.

Secondly, we are also constantly looking at the delivery of programs in the province. Is it meeting the needs of our customer, if you will, the student out there, regardless of age of that student, regardless of geographical location of that student, the program offerings that our different institutions offer — particularly at Saskatchewan Polytechnic and our regional

college system that broker programs through Sask Polytechnic — to ensure we're meeting the labour market demands.

So we are in constant . . . and I say constant in the sense that we're continuously meeting with the Ministry of the Economy in particular and looking at labour market demands. Certainly with the Ministry of Health, I'm looking at what their labour market demands are with respect to different types of medical professionals that they may require. As the population increases and ages, what are their labour market demands?

So I think it's fair to say that we are constantly working within the sector as a whole to ensure that we are providing the kinds of services that the learner out there needs. And so from a very general, broad sense . . . I think you might recall last week we had the regional college presidents and board Chairs in, that that's an ongoing discussion with them as to the kinds of programs they're offering with respect to their respective institutions. Are we looking at credit granting opportunities for regional colleges? It's something that's on the table right now that we're looking at. And what kind of programs can we deliver at those facilities and those locations to meet the needs of the learners? So we are constantly looking at program delivery and how can we better serve our customers.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for that answer, and certainly that is as it should be. I guess what I'm referring to are exceptional, you know, above and beyond the daily sort of examination of the success or where things need to be improved of the ministry. But are there any particular system-wide reviews that would necessitate people coming in to chair a review? I think of work done in the past by individuals like Michael Atkinson. Is there anything anticipated at this time that would be above and beyond the kind of activity that the minister has rightly described as being sort of an ongoing pursuit of the ministry?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you for the question. A couple of things come to mind is, by virtue of legislation in the regional college system, we have to do a regional college review, the ministry does, by the end of '15-16, which we'll undertake this year. But it's part and parcel that I identified in my earlier answer.

SHEQAB is doing an analysis of what constitutes a university, that if a post-secondary educational institution in the province either comes into the province or is currently existing in the province and wants to have university status, what is the process we go through for establishing a third or fourth or fifth university, if you will. There are some provinces — I mean we look at Nova Scotia — there's a number of universities in Nova Scotia for a province smaller than ours. So I've asked SHEQAB to undertake that. I think they'll be coming back later this year with a report and hopefully recommendations as to what needs to be done to look at any particular educational institution that wants to call themselves a university.

So other than that I think, if I understood your question, that there's no other outstanding issues or outstanding areas that we're thinking of bringing in external consultants or having perhaps some academics in the province do some review of at this time.

Mr. McCall: — That is indeed what I was asking for, Minister. Thank you for that answer. In terms of individual institutions, I think I'd seen an RFP [request for proposal] go out for some kind of review work to be done of NORTEP-NORPAC, which was referenced earlier by the minister. Within the sector as a whole and the different components of the sector, is there review work being undertaken, or within particular institutions, and what is the upshot of those endeavours?

Ms. Bloor Cavers: — I'll be pleased to answer the question. I'm Tammy Bloor Cavers, the assistant deputy minister of sector relations and student services. So in response to your question, yes there has been a review conducted of the northern teacher education program, the Northern Professional Access College. And that work has been completed and submitted to the minister. The results of that work will inform the next agreement, moving forward, which we are in negotiations with NORTEP right now.

Mr. McCall: — I guess on that review in particular, are those documents publicly available, or what is the status of that information?

Ms. Bloor Cavers: — The report, I think the intent would be . . . The report has been submitted to the ministry. It has been shared with NORTEP as well as their respective board. And following that, there hasn't been a wide distribution of the report. It really is intended to inform work going forward to establish the next contract and components of the contract in terms of outcomes expected of the organization.

I think it can be made . . . [inaudible]. We would have to go back and confirm if it's currently available on Saskatchewan.ca.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — I've been briefed on the report, Mr. McCall, but I haven't actually physically seen the report myself yet. But it will form the basis of a new five-year funding arrangement with NORTEP and NORPAC, and so those discussions, those negotiations will go on. And I don't see any reason why we wouldn't release the report after we've had a chance to utilize it for the basis of the new five-year agreement.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for that undertaking. If we could just hear a bit more about this particular report. Who conducted it? And again you've described the intent of what it would be used for, but who conducted the review? What sort of dollars were involved? If you could illuminate us on that.

Ms. Bloor Cavers: — The arrangement, the evaluation was a joint evaluation committee that was established that represented individuals from the ministry as well as NORTEP. And a consultant was hired. It was conducted by Probe Research in 2014 under the oversight of the joint evaluation committee. And I'll just confirm the dollar figure. I believe it was . . . I don't want to misquote the amount. If you could just give us a moment please. Thank you.

Okay. We've just been able to confirm the dollar amount for the review was \$74,455. And just an additional point to add, the work was completed by NORTEP-NORPAC. They've hired, at the time in late 2014, the SELU unit, the Saskatchewan Education Leadership Unit — that's from the University of Saskatchewan, as you might be familiar — to lead a strategic

planning session to develop a northern five-year plan. So they have work under way to develop a strategic plan, and certainly that's in consultation with a number of northern partners: business, industry, and educational institutions in the North as well as First Nation communities.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much for that, Ms. Bloor Cavers. In terms of the timeline for what's the go-forward on NORTEP-NORPAC, obviously the dollars referenced in the budget would seem to be a vote of confidence for that institution. But what is the go-forward in terms of implementation?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — So the current funding arrangement expired as of yesterday, March 31st, 2015, and we anticipate to have a new five-year funding arrangement in place by the end of June of this year.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that. Other institutions throughout the sector, NORTEP-NORPAC is a bit of a hybrid certainly, but in the regional college system with the universities, with the technical colleges, are there any particular reviews being carried out similar to that which we've just discussed?

Ms. Greenberg: — There's two different examples I can share in terms of some of the reviews that are going on. They're not really reviews, but it's more about collaboration and working together. And the first one is two years ago I set up a working group, an action team involving the presidents from U of R [University of Regina], U of S, and Sask Poly to look at how we could improve on accountability, effectiveness, efficiencies — work together, collaborate. And over the course of the four years we've identified four areas where work has gone on.

The first area is looking at credit transfer. That's been an issue that's been discussed by a number of people. The credit transfer, we had a conference last year, not only with Saskatchewan. There was people from other provinces. WestCAT [Western Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer] — I don't remember what it stands for, but it's WestCAT — came to talk about credit transfer with the institutions. So for that theme there's a working group that's set up, and they're looking at how to improve credit transfer and also look at when you have students that go from one university to the other, or go between Sask Poly and the universities. That's the first one.

The second one was about access to library. Work was done so that any student — doesn't matter if they attend U of R, U of S, or Sask Poly — they can access the library system in the cities where the libraries are located. But it also lends itself to the librarians from the three institutions working together to try to look at how they can share some resources, some common databases and look at opportunities because there are so many things that are going electronic and some of the costs. So they're doing the library.

[15:30]

The third is the area of procurement. And procurement, right now there is work that has been going on between U of S and U of R, everything from bulk purchasing for gas and other areas, but the three of them are working together looking at areas for

procurement. It's, you know, it's larger purchases. And they've talked about inviting other partners in besides themselves; eventually, you know, could the regional colleges, could other institutions that are located within, let's say Saskatoon, participate? And this exercise has also helped both universities look at how they track and monitor procurement within their institution because some of it gets to be decentralized versus centralized modus.

The last one that's been worked on is teaching collaboration. So the last one is teaching collaboration. What that is is that there's certain classes that are more specialized — some of them are language classes, some of them are physics — with low enrolment in either at the U of S, U of R. They're actually joint-teaching them together, so you may teach a session 301 together between the U of R, U of S. So you'll have an instructor in one city, you'll use video conferencing to join the class from the other city. So those are the four areas that have been worked on, and we believe progress is being made and are quite pleased with the outcome. That's the first process that's been set up.

The second process that's been set up is working with the regional colleges: Sask Poly, SIIT, Gabriel Dumont Institute. We're trying to sort of take the lessons that we learned from working with the two universities and Sask Poly and how can we do some collaboration with the regional college level. We've just started in 2014 and we've had a few meetings. And one of the areas we're focusing in on is First Nation and Métis education best practices, and some of the opportunities that we can learn from each other and also start sharing some things that go on at the different colleges.

So there's been a group set up too now. They've gone away and they're starting to look at some common things and areas that can make progress. This group, both groups only meet a couple times a year. We usually meet by video conference versus in person, at least for the one involving the two universities and Sask Poly. So that's it in a nutshell.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much for that. Just on the work that's been conducted around procurement so far, I think of two examples in terms of what is done between provincial jurisdictions around purchasing in the health care sector and the kind of economies of scale that you're able to realize some savings for individual jurisdictions like that. I guess, is the game plan to get it working sector-wide and then look for partners to the west, east, possibly south of us? Is that an accurate understanding of where that would be going?

Ms. Greenberg: — I think it's a little too early. We don't have the same collaborative efforts that you've sort of seen in health because of the autonomy of the institutions, versus where health, you've got the 12 health regions that are joined together in many different ways. But they have identified a number of things, and the hope is actually to expand it, but right now it's trying to work with the three institutions and how they can find economies of scale between them.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — I think it's also fair to say that with Priority Saskatchewan now, and Minister Wyant unveiling part and parcel of the procurement policy that the Government of Saskatchewan is looking to refine . . . I recall Lionel LaBelle

talking about the MASH [municipalities, academic institutions, schools, and hospitals] sector. And I was always familiar with the MUSH sector: municipalities, universities, schools, and hospitals. And I said, what's MASH? And he said, well it's the more common term now is municipalities, academia, schools, and hospitals.

So there's no question that Mr. LaBelle and officials in Priority Saskatchewan have been doing consultations across the health care sector and across the academic, academia sector. And it's fair to say that those sectors are very interested in where we end up with Priority Saskatchewan to see if there is collaborative opportunities there, certainly efficiencies and savings in procurement.

And as the deputy said, we're probably a little too premature right now to say that, you know, they're looking west, east, south, whatever the case may be. But certainly with respect to the New West Partnership, anything we're doing on procurement needs to be acceptable to New West Partnership agreements as well. But he reports back to cabinet that the MASH sector is very interested in where we end up on this and finding collaborative opportunities.

Mr. McCall: — I'd well imagine certainly that would be the case, Mr. Minister. Is the minister or deputy minister or officials, in the work around procurement, are they familiar with the work of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact? Saskatchewan is a member of the Midwestern Legislative Conference and certainly, you know, at the annual meeting you hear about the great work of collaboration that is done between the American states that are part of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact. And being the hospitable souls that they are, they're always expressing an interest in the possibility of involvement from Canadian jurisdictions. Any insight on that where that might be at, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Yes. I've never attended a conference, and when I wasn't in cabinet, I didn't have the opportunity to attend any of the Midwest legislators' conferences. But we have been approached by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact. As a matter of fact, Mr. Marchuk, the Legislative Secretary for the Minister of Education, went down to one of their meetings at their request and at their expense — I think it was Milwaukee, if I'm correct — back in the late fall. The gentleman, whose name escapes me right now . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I'm sorry?

Mr. Marchuk: — Larry Isaak.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Larry Isaak came up and met with Minister Morgan and myself and Mr. Marchuk to talk about the very things that you've identified and to explain how there is a collaborative effort amongst the Midwestern states and their post-secondary educational institutions. We're quite interested in it. We were the first province that they approached in Canada to become a member of this organization. And I know that the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Mr. Marchuk had the opportunity to meet with another senior individual on his holiday here over the winter, just happened to be in the same location, so had breakfast with that gentleman to talk further about this organization.

So some of the things that they do on the insurance side I'm not sure would be applicable here in Canada; very different systems with respect to insurance and the procurement of insurance services. But there's no question that, as part of our international education strategy, we want to provide more opportunities for our students to gain access to their institutions at perhaps a lower tuition rate like they do, as they recognize each others' students. Secondly, to attract some of their students up into our province, particularly in the areas of engineering and agriculture, is the two areas we talked about.

With respect to procurement, I think that as we develop through Priority Saskatchewan, where we're going to end up, and should we become a member of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact — and I say should; we haven't made that decision yet — we'll want to explore that further.

But I would appreciate any comments you might have on that or advice you might have on that, having attended conferences. I'm assuming you've attended the Midwest Legislative Conferences and whatnot. You seem very familiar with it, so any advice you might have for myself or Mr. Marchuk would be very welcome.

Mr. McCall: — Well far be it from me to have advice for Mr. Marchuk, but certainly this past summer I had an opportunity to talk with Mr. Isaak along with Minister Morgan. So I'm glad to see that this has been followed up in that regard. And there may be things that aren't apparent and that would make this not a good fit for Saskatchewan, but certainly worth exploring. So my compliments to the minister, to the member in terms of pursuing what seems like a good opportunity. So glad to see that's happening.

In terms of the other work that is being done around, as has been referenced, around best practices for First Nations and Métis education and engagement, I guess if I could get the deputy minister or minister to expand on that further just with regards to, again sharing of best practices would be one thing, but in terms of the work being conducted by the ministry. We certainly had another great piece of work done, Chairman Merasty with the joint task force on education employment opportunities for First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan. Where are we at in terms of responding to the recommendations of that report? And how does that coincide with the committee that the deputy minister has identified?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you for the question. The joint task force is a . . . I don't want to say it's a seminal piece of work, but it was very, very important to our strategy, our government strategy, not only in the growth plan but with respect to closing those educational gaps and graduation gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in both the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] system and the post-secondary system.

And so I'm just, you know, I'm looking at the report here now. It's funny you should ask. The media's been asking as well here recently, the last few days, about where are we at on JTF [joint task force], the post-secondary recommendations as well as the K to 12. But there were six different areas in the JTF report, the joint task force report that applied specifically to my ministry: the expand ABE [adult basic education], actually that's

Ministry of the Economy, but our work in collaboration with them with expanding adult basic education; fund student supports; credit transfer; indigenization; leadership opportunities for staff; and expanding the First Nations and Métis institutions' capacity.

And you know, some of the things that we did in response to that, I can rhyme off a number of the responses we've had to those specific areas. We can talk about the expansion of the adult basic education seats and the funding that's gone towards that. I think there's provision in this year's budget — correct me if I'm wrong — 300 additional seats in ABE?

Mr. McCall: — And I appreciate that, but certainly our time is precious, and there's not a lot of it. So I guess if the minister or officials could identify what remains outstanding. And certainly I am cognizant of things like the ABE expansion that's gone on and, you know, quite frankly glad to see it. But if the minister could give us a bit of a précis on what marching orders remain outstanding from the JTF for advanced education.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — I'll let officials address it as well, but I think it's fair to say — and don't take this the wrong way; we're not patting ourselves on the back here — but we made substantive progress, from the Ministry of Advanced Education's perspective, with the recommendations that have come forward in JTF on that side of it specifically. So you know, of the six areas that were identified in the joint task force specific to post-secondary education, we've made strides on all six areas in response to the joint task force recommendations.

Is there more to do? Sure there's more to do. But everything from where we look at student supports . . . I think of the examples at SIIT specifically and the monies that were provided — both last year's fiscal budget and then this year's fiscal budget; \$375,000 that President Bellegarde asked for during the course of the fiscal year specifically for student supports at that institution — has gone a long way, he tells me, to assisting them in keeping students in school, to keeping them in campus in Saskatoon or Prince Albert or Regina, wherever they're going to school, and finishing their programs.

We're doing some follow-up to see the effect of these monies being allocated as to it's got to be measurable and accountable, and the president knows that, but he tells me anecdotally that it's working. If he can keep a student in school, engaged for one year, he gets them much closer to graduation. There's a considerable correlation there to graduation rates. So we haven't got data for you right now, Mr. McCall, because this is the first year. We're just coming to the end of the first year on those dollars, SIIT specifically, but we felt it was a good enough program — and reports back from President Bellegarde, a good enough program — that we funded it again this year.

With respect to some of these other things, officials, I'll turn it over to Dr. Greenberg, if you want to comment on this?

Ms. Greenberg: — The comment that I may make, and I know you may want to move on to other topics and not hear me go on talking about some of the work plan what the regional college group is looking at, but there's been a work plan identified. And some of the issues that we're dealing with, it actually has to do with metrics. Some of the data that gets recorded by different

institutions and different organizations is not always . . . not the same things are tracked or not the same starting points are used. So they're trying to get a better handle on metrics and also on measuring things in a similar fashion.

But I just have sort of a work plan here, and some of it really deals with, you know, everyone agreeing what the problem statement is, doing some analysis on the things that are working and not working in terms of getting graduates and matching graduates with employers. The other area that they've done is that they've identified looking at best practice models as part of an implementation plan.

And the third part is again a little bit on short-term and long-term measures and looking at how will you be able to track. So that's, I've sort of given the *Reader's Digest* version of a work plan that is now starting to be worked on.

[15:45]

Mr. McCall: — For one, Dr. Greenberg, I'd be happy to hear you go on all day on this subject. But it is the limit on the time, that is my concern, so it's not anything about the information you're relating. But for two, if there is documentation that could be provided in lieu of further explanation, I'm a happy reader. So I'd appreciate that as well.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — We'll undertake to do that for you.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I guess moving on into subvote (AE02), in terms of the again operational supports under the allocations, you know, pretty much a straight line. Big change of course comes with universities, federated and affiliated colleges with about \$12 million decrease in expenditure involved there. Could the minister or officials characterize where that decrease has taken place? And then we'll have some follow-up to that.

Ms. Greenberg: — I'll identify the decreases and, just to clarify, this is the universities, federated and affiliated colleges. There is a decrease of 2.5 per cent or \$12.209 million, and the decrease is due to several factors. First is actually an increase of 1 per cent or \$4.846 million to operating grants of 1 per cent to the universities and affiliated colleges, and it's a 2 per cent increase to federated institutes. Next is a . . .

Mr. McCall: — If I could stop you right there, if you could clearly identify which institutions are involved, for the record. And just to explain some of my bias on it, I'm a graduate of Campion College at the University of Regina. So is a federated college . . . When I hear federated, I think of Campion. That may not be the case. So if you could identify for the record as well the institutions involved.

Ms. Greenberg: — I'll list them by category versus by name. The 1 per cent goes to the universities and to the affiliated colleges. The 2 per cent will go to the federated colleges, which includes Campion College, Luther, St. Thomas More, and First Nations University. The 2 per cent also goes to our technical institutes. That includes the Sask Polytechnic. The 2 per cent, as I was saying, goes to Sask Poly. It goes to Dumont Technical Institute. It goes to the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies. And the affiliated colleges, I'll list them. That's

at 1 per cent to St. Peter's College; Emmanuel & St. Chad; Lutheran Theological Seminary; St. Andrew's College; Briercreech bible college; Horizon College and Seminary; NORTEP-NORPAC, which is a program; Gabriel Dumont Institute; and the SUNTEP [Saskatchewan urban native teacher education program]. With Gabriel Dumont, there's Gabriel Dumont Institute which is separate from Gabriel Technical Institute, which got the 2 per cent. And I think I have covered . . . and the regional colleges, which I could list if you want them for the record.

Mr. McCall: — We'll take the regional colleges as read. No offence to the regional colleges.

In terms of, I guess again moving back to the start of the institutions that the deputy minister has identified, what does this mean in terms of the go-forward around either the need for increased tuition or impacts on programming? And if you could, sort of go through it institution by institution.

Ms. Greenberg: — In terms of tuition, the tuition for the University of Regina has not been set yet. There's discussions. It hasn't been approved by their board. The tuition for the University of Saskatchewan was announced in January, prior to the decision, before they knew what the budget would be, in their '15-16 budget. The U of S, they have stated that their principles are based that they don't base their tuition on the government operational grant that's provided each year; they base their tuition on a number of criteria. Sask Poly has not announced their tuition yet.

Mr. McCall: — I guess if we could with those then. And there's certainly a fair amount of communication that goes on between the ministry and the sector leading up to the budget, and I think a fairly well-developed understanding of what the implications are for different tranches of funding or not for the institutions. So I guess if the minister or officials could again, with the institutions in question, what's your understanding as to what this means for these institutions, the funding that's been provided in this budget?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Well I think it's fair to say you're absolutely correct in that there was a fair bit of discussion. I came into this portfolio in June of 2014 and embarked on a series of meetings with the respective presidents of the various institutions, touring their facilities to get a better understanding of their challenges from an accommodations perspective.

During the course of the fiscal year, and being a member of treasury board, I was quite aware of how some of the things had changed with respect to oil and what was happening with respect to our revenue base. So in developing the budget, I'm one of these that doesn't believe in surprising institutions on budget day; in saying, you know, when the Minister of Finance gets up and says, here's what your allocation is, that it comes as a surprise to anybody who has to make decisions with respect to their respective budgets in their institution.

So we gave them a range during the course of the fiscal year as we were developing the budget to do their planning scenarios around, and that range was zero to 2 per cent. And I couldn't tell them until we finalized the budget where they would end up with respect to what was going to be allocated to them, but I

said, you know, I don't want to surprise you on budget day, so during your planning scenarios, factor in zero to 2. And whatever you need to do to make decisions around program offerings or things you need to do to meet those targets, that's the heads-up I'm going to give you.

With respect to the University of Saskatchewan, the conversation was a little bit different over the course of a number of months between senior officials, seniors officials in the ministry and senior officials at the University of Saskatchewan, as to a number of different things going on on that campus. Of course there was a change in leadership and an interim president appointed and an interim provost appointed. There were some changes at the board level, including a new Chair. And I think there were some changes made at the College of Medicine with a new dean coming in who hired a couple of senior officials, one being a chief financial officer to help that particular dean with some of the financial allocations at that college.

There was also a new leadership or some changes on the financial side in the financial leadership group at the University of Saskatchewan in getting a much better handle on what their financial situation was. And it became apparent during the course of the fiscal year that the University of Saskatchewan had undertaken a number of initiatives, if you will, to bring them back to a very stable financial position, notwithstanding the fact that they had accumulated significant savings on campus in a variety of envelopes to the tune of about \$300 million, 200 million of which the university will describe as internally restricted, meaning that the board of governors sets parameters in place that they can only access those dollars based on the board policy — about \$100 million worth of savings in various faculties when you add it all up, about \$100 million that are non-restricted, and were available to the institution.

So as we developed the budget, in giving them those planning scenarios we were able to share with them, as we got much closer to budget day — as a matter of fact, it was the morning of the budget on an embargoed basis — exactly what those institutions were getting when the Minister of Finance rose to his feet that day.

So you know, when I say 1 per cent, if you look at the university funding model that was under your government and under your leadership as minister of Advanced Education, the funding model actually when all the different factors go into it, I'm not sure if you understood it when you were minister, but I think you have to have a Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] in mathematics to understand how the funding formula works for the two universities, the funding model. But that being said, when all is said and done, for the University of Regina, it means about a 1.8 per cent bump on their operating base. And then with the University of Saskatchewan, the different funding envelopes that we provide, it's about a \$14.7 million net reduction that they need to and have agreed to tap into their savings.

With respect to tuition, we know what the University of Saskatchewan's announced. The University of Regina has not announced yet what they're going to do on tuition. I've seen in the media, as I'm sure you have, the president speculating as to

where that might end up, between a 3 and 4 per cent tuition increase across the various faculties there.

Saskatchewan Polytechnic was doing a zero-planning scenario and got 2 per cent. And the president of Sask Polytechnic, I think you probably heard him as well on budget day say he was pleasantly surprised with that. That will afford him the opportunity to offer more with respect to programs. It remains to be seen what they're going to do on tuition yet. And the regional colleges all were doing a zero-based budget exercise and ended up receiving 1 per cent.

So you know, we believe that those institutions have to develop those programs and their offerings, based with their respective boards and their senior management teams, based on what they receive from the Government of Saskatchewan and other sources of revenue. So it remains to be seen what's going to happen with all those institutions. I think the University of Saskatchewan's the only one that's come out and definitively stated that there will be no reduction in services to students on that campus. It remains to be seen what happens at U of R and other institutions.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for that answer. And certainly you're right about the complexity of the funding arrangements. I think, you know, once you get through this, you're ready to take on equalization or hang out with Jack Mintz at length.

But certainly again I appreciate what the minister is saying in terms of that active engagement with the sector and striving for no surprises or limiting the surprises as best you can, in terms of . . . And again, the minister's referenced this, but U of S in particular has gone through a wrenching passage here in terms of some of the conflicts they've had around governance, around decisions that were being made under the aegis of TransformUS. And certainly there are other commentators that have come forward and said that the savings that were arrived at through some pretty wrenching decision making were then taken up by the provincial government in terms of the funding on offer. And the idea being that — and I've seen the minister reference this in the media — that the University of Saskatchewan is “not being punished for frugality,” that should be as it is because you want to incent good behaviour on the part of the institution, certainly as the ministry.

But those dollars were arrived at from some pretty wrenching decisions made on the part of the institution, and those decisions were made in the name of carrying the institution forward on a sound footing. So it begs a number of questions. Is this a one-year thing? As much as you can presuppose what your colleagues in treasury board and cabinet are going to decide for next year, or whatever the budget process is going forward, is it a limited-time approach on these hard-arrived-at reserves on the part of the University of Saskatchewan? Or is that a fair characterization? Does the minister dispute that? Could you clarify that for the committee?

[16:00]

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Sure. I appreciate the question. And I won't disagree with you, Mr. McCall, that there has been some difficult times at the University of Saskatchewan. I'm an

alumnus from that particular institution, a former student union president. Very proud of it; love that university. Love the University of Regina. I get to represent that constituency here in the City of Regina, and have come to know the U of R quite well.

But there also was some financial decisions made at that institution that didn't impact anybody. There were dollars being put away, and there were investment returns on dollars being invested on behalf of that institution that provided them with some additional income that had nothing to do with program cessation or some of the changes that were done under President Busch-Vishniac, some of the changes that were initiated under President MacKinnon. So there, you know, do I applaud them for good fiscal management? I absolutely do, and I've said that in my public comments, whether the media pick it up or not. I do applaud them for good fiscal management, as I do all of our institutions. The University of Regina has run 20 consecutive balanced budgets now, don't have same kinds of reserves or accumulated savings as the University of Saskatchewan, or we'd be having probably a different conversation with them.

Is it a one-year term? As far as I can sit here and assure them it's a one-year situation, yes. That's what I communicated to them. I believe that's what the Premier communicated to them. But if we're sitting here talking a year from now at \$22 oil and potash has a tough year or major crop failure, I think you and I both know — you've been through this exercise; you know what it's like to develop a provincial budget — things change. Things can change rather dramatically, as we saw this past year.

The way the budget was dealt with this year, the way the budget was communicated to this particular institution was that this was a one-year ask of them to dip into their savings to assist the provincial government in a tough fiscal year which, by the way, they did. I don't want to say begrudgingly; they understand the situation of the province.

They also understand that we're partners in this, that they're one of the best-funded universities in all of Canada as a medical doctoral university relative to other comparable medical doctoral universities. I think they're number two by virtue of Statistics Canada saying that the level of operating grant they receive from the taxpayers, from the tax base of this province, is number two in Canada relative to other universities of a similar nature as a percentage of their total operating revenue and one of the lowest universities as a percentage of operating revenue from tuition.

The University of Regina, on comparable universities as a comprehensive university, is number one as a percentage of their operating revenue being derived from the provincial operating grant from the Government of Saskatchewan.

So as far as I can comment . . . And I don't write the budget, and if the Minister of Finance was sitting here right now he would say that, you know, you're not going to make any promises for any ensuing years. But that was our intent when communicated to the University of Saskatchewan. As long as I'm sitting in this chair and the Premier has confidence in me in doing this job, I'm going to try and hold to that commitment.

Mr. McCall: — I want to thank the minister for that answer. I guess in terms of, and you've rightfully mentioned the good work that's been done at the University of Regina as well in terms of looking for as many savings as can possibly be brought to bear, I guess what's the understanding of the minister or officials for the University of Regina going forward in terms of what this means around again the range of tuition increases under question or as regards program offerings and their future?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Well again I would be speculating. You know full well that tuition policy is . . . These universities are independent of government. They set their own tuition policy. Senior management will make a recommendation to their board of governors for a tuition recommendation, and the board of governors will make their decision. I don't control the board of governors. The government doesn't control the board of governors. I think it was the same under your government, that these are independent bodies with respect to their decision-making process.

Again it would be speculation on my part on what it means for tuition at the University of Regina or program cessation. And again in all fairness to the University of Regina president, Dr. Timmons, in doing an interview, not everything you say gets put into the article and not everything you say gets clipped on television or radio. And so my discussions with the University of Regina president, in giving her and her senior officials the scenario over the course of a number of months of a zero to 2 per cent increase in doing their planning scenario, it did not come as a surprise to them on budget day when they received a 1. Maybe it did. Maybe they were expecting zero and they got 1, or maybe they were expecting 2 and got 1. And so she is quoted as saying that they asked for 4 per cent, and I had indicated to the president through officials at that time that 4 per cent wasn't on in this particular fiscal situation. Clearly as we were moving along in developing the budget and seeing where oil was going, 4 per cent clearly wasn't on.

And so I think it remains to be seen the decisions they have to make with respect to what they have available to them as the operating grant coming from the Government of Saskatchewan. You know I liken it and I've used this example that when government has to make decisions with respect to where we spend the people's money, at the end of the day we don't go around and say, well the people didn't pay enough taxes for us to do all the things we wanted to do. So it's the people's fault.

The people of Saskatchewan pay a lot in taxes. We'd like them to pay less. And when we're given the opportunity to make decisions on their behalf in this legislature where that money goes, we have to make tough decisions. Treasury board, cabinet, caucus had to make tough decisions this year with respect to where the dollars that we had estimated get to go.

We could still have some difficulties this year if the resource revenues don't come into what we projected, what Finance officials project, and all the different think tanks and experts that they rely on project. So the University of Regina's going to have to make some tough decisions. I understand that. But I think given the fiscal situation of the province . . . I mean we just need to look next door to the west as to some of the decisions being made there. And I look at some of the numbers that those institutions are having to deal with, with respect to

overall reductions this coming year, and perhaps ensuing years. Those institutions are going to have to make some tough decisions.

So I think on balance, in the post-secondary sector — I know I'm getting long-winded; I apologize — but in the post-secondary sector in this entire budget, I thought did quite well with respect to where we were able to find dollars, not only on the operating side, but enhanced dollars in PMR, which is areas that they had asked for additional dollars. And we were able to find those dollars — 10 per cent bumps to both Sask Polytechnic and the universities and right across the regional college sector. So you know, I thank my colleagues for supporting us in that area.

Mr. McCall: — Again thank you, Minister, for that answer. And there's one sort of thing I'd add to what you'd referenced around the whole question of tuition and the setting of tuition. It certainly is the purview of the board of governors. You know, I'm not disputing that, nor am I suggesting that you should get into the university's Act to change that approach. But certainly I was part of a government that was able to negotiate with the sector in terms of arriving at a university tuition freeze. Predecessors on your side were party to similar arrangements with the sector.

And again, it's a negotiated approach. It doesn't offend the autonomy of the institution, but it does recognize what's happening with tuition and the fact that there are things that a provincial government can do, that the Ministry of Advanced Education can do, that the budget of the province of Saskatchewan can do when it comes to impacting the whole question of tuition. It's one set of approaches within the policy toolbox.

And I guess you know, we'd had, in terms of long-winded, I appreciate the information that the minister was conveying. I was reviewing some of the proceedings from last year's estimates. Quite frankly, the minister doesn't know anything about being long-winded in terms of the answers being provided, so keep up the good work in that regard.

But in terms of there have been different approaches in the life of the government that you're part of as regards the whole question of tuition and tuition management. So I guess I'd ask a question of the minister. And there's some things that we can surmise from the decisions that have been made and consequences that arise thereof, but what is the tuition management policy, or what is the approach of tuition on the part of this government? Mr. Minister, can you state that for the record here today.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Again I appreciate the question. And yes, you were part of a government that implemented a tuition freeze, and that was a policy decision that you and your colleagues made at that time, given the financial circumstances of the province. I guess maybe you weren't part of it, but some of your predecessors clearly were part of a government under the NDP [New Democratic Party] that also had massive tuition increases at universities, 10, 11 per cent increases. So those governments had the opportunity at that time as well, following what you suggested, to do something about that and obviously chose to not do that.

Our approach to tuition management at these institutions that are independent bodies is that we work with them with respect to what we're able to provide to them on an operating grant basis for the operations of their institutions, and leave those decisions up to them. They're independent bodies.

I know that we may differ on that. And I think probably a year's time from now, we're going to have the opportunity to go out to the people and talk about, here's what we're offering. Here's what we've decided that we want to do with respect to our support of post-secondary education. And I respectfully suggest that you and your colleagues are going to have the opportunity to go out and say, well here's what we would do if given the opportunity to govern. Here's how we would manage tuition at the universities here in Saskatchewan.

So have I raised the issue with the senior leaders at all institutions? I absolutely have. I've asked them to be mindful of the fact that accessibility is still a critically important tenet of post-secondary education in this province. If you don't provide or allow the universities, or interfere with respect to their tuition-setting policy . . . And by putting a freeze on, you are interfering in the tuition-setting policy. I mean you could say it's a negotiation. I suspect that unless you were backfilling that with additional dollars from the operating grant, it's not much of a negotiation. It's kind of being imposed upon them. We're not going to go down that path. I think in talking to leaders of these institutions in private conversations — perhaps they don't say it publicly — tuition freezes are not good public policy in their minds.

So you know, I think we can agree to disagree on that. I hear what you're saying with respect to managing tuition policy or governments can do things to help offset increased tuition. But short of providing more operating dollars or having the university cease programs or lay off staff, I'm not quite sure what you're offering them. Because I've heard you suggest that you can do those kinds of things, but I don't hear the, and here's how you do that kind of thing.

So you know, I just respectfully say that this is the path we've chosen from a policy perspective. We stand by it in our budget, and we stand by it in what we're offering to our institutions and in supports for students. And we're prepared to have that discussion with the public on that.

Mr. McCall: — Well I thank the minister for that answer, and certainly I have been part of previous discussions with the good people of Saskatchewan. I think of 2007, where again your predecessors in this government, they were, you know, four-square behind a tuition freeze themselves. So that has changed, and I guess what I'm looking for is a clear statement of policy or policy direction from the minister and this government on this question. I think what the minister has related has gone some ways towards providing that, and I thank him for it.

I guess again we've got plenty of terrain to cover. So moving on to technical institutes, if you could just briefly describe what's happening in the budget and how that I think \$3 million-plus increase will be put to use.

[16:15]

Ms. Greenberg: — The technical institutes had an increase of 2.3 per cent which works out to \$3.556 million, and these increases, this net increase is a result of several things: a \$2.444 million increase in operating grants which is the 2 per cent increase for Sask Polytechnic, SIIT, and Dumont Technical Institute. It includes \$400,000 in new operating funding to SIIT to help them address core operating, human resource, and information technology, and also improve training for First Nations people. And it also represents an increase of \$712,000 for Sask Polytechnic for accommodation costs, and that increase in accommodation costs which occurred in previous years which we covered this year.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. As regards SIIT — and certainly this is a question or policy question that's seen some evolution even within the past 10 years and certainly from the time when the minister was president of the students' union up at Saskatoon — in terms of what sort of efforts does the ministry make in terms of working with SIIT, in terms of making sure that that federal support, which has been sometimes a question mark in the whole equation, what sort of work is undertaken by the province in that regard?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — It's a fair question. It's typically handled through Minister Reiter, First Nations and Métis relations. He has the file on that, and he deals with his federal counterpart on an ongoing basis and on a variety of issues with respect to First Nations issues.

And I know Minister Reiter has raised this with Minister Valcourt and talks about sustained funding to this particular institution. I've not had any direct contact with the federal government myself. I have the responsibility for the provincial component of this, but certainly a number of discussions with the senior leadership group at SIIT: Chief Darcy Bear who's the Chair of the board and Riel Bellegarde who's the president of the institution; and Mr. Ray Ahenakew who I think is the, I'm not sure what Ray's title is, but he certainly makes his views known as I'm sure he has to you when you were in this chair.

I think it's fair to say that that institution was looking for long-term, sustainable funding from the federal government and asking the province to provide additional support where we could. Their ask was larger than what we were able to provide in the budget, as was every institution's ask. And I don't want to speak for President Bellegarde or his officials but you know, I can convey what their . . . They were quite pleased on budget morning when we met with them on an embargo basis and talked about what they were going to get for this year.

I wasn't able to deliver everything that they had asked for, but clearly it goes a long way towards a couple of things and that is providing some administration dollars that that president needs desperately because most, all funding from the feds is program funding. And so he was literally losing faculty to other institutions who could pay higher salaries and was asking for some assistance on that front, both on the student support side and then with some administration dollars. And that's where we were able to come through with additional dollars. So he was quite pleased with that.

Mr. McCall: — I appreciate the answer. And certainly Ray Ahenakew's made a great contribution over the years to public

policy, and is not a shy individual.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — No shrinking violet.

Mr. McCall: — Certainly no shrinking violet. I guess this would lead naturally into the whole question of First Nations University, and the minister had referenced the question of competitive salaries for staff. And certainly reading the papers as I do, I noted the president's being pleased about the \$75,000 increase that was on offer.

But historically there's been something of a disparity between staff at the First Nations University and the different campuses, certainly on the professorial basis compared to, say, just a stone's throw away at Luther College or Campion College or the main campus at the University of Regina. What is the state of . . . Is there parity that has been achieved that I'm not aware of? And if so, then great. Or is there a gap between staff at First Nations University and the broader system? And what impacts does that have on the ability of that institution to do its job?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you for the question, Mr. McCall. We don't have the exact salary figures here with respect to, on a comparative basis, with respect to U of R professors versus FNUC [First Nations University of Canada] professors. I'm advised that they're getting closer to parity but they're not there yet, but they're getting closer to parity.

I think it's fair to say that there's been some growing pains with this institution over the last number of years. I've met with the new president — I guess he's probably in office now a year, almost a year, Dr. Dockstator; I don't know if you've had the opportunity to meet with him or not — and their board Chair. Of course their board is appointed by FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations], and it's a very complicated relationship, I think is probably the best way to put it, in the sense of there's a governance oversight arrangement with the University of Regina to ensure that there is stability there. And I think it's fair to say that by all accounts and reports, the University of Regina in their oversight capacity is quite pleased with senior leadership at that institution now, and there appears to be stability within their governance process.

So you know, my view has been — and I've met with the president probably two or three times now — because of the fact that there is a relationship with the federal government, because of the fact there's a relationship with FSIN and there's a financial relationship with the provincial government, I really don't have any oversight capability, so to speak, or responsibility over that particular institution, other than the fact that they have an administrative arrangement, governance arrangement with the University of the Regina.

And so officials work with them to ensure that all of the different metrics that they need to meet with respect to accountability and governance are being met. And that's where we . . . Not that our funding is contingent upon that, but obviously you want to ensure that those kinds of things that you're providing dollars for are being delivered to the student and to their program offering. So again my view is that that institution has come a long way, and this president is providing good strong leadership.

Mr. McCall: — And again this sort of dips back into the whole question of the federal support or not, and I couldn't agree with the minister more. It is a complicated arrangement. But again in terms of a vital institution for the province of Saskatchewan, what is the status of federal support for the institution, and is there any sort of work ongoing that would see a return to previous levels of support?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — So I'm advised . . . And if you have any insight as to when the federal budget's coming down, could you let us know? Because that would be of great interest as well, to see all of these different institutions that rely on this kind of federal funding . . . So what we hear is reports back from . . . For example President Dockstator has been down to Ottawa on a number of occasions now, dealing with federal officials and the minister in trying to obtain long-term, guaranteed funding, not been successful yet. I'm advised they're on a year-to-year funding arrangement with the federal government. So not knowing what's in the federal budget or when it's even going to be delivered — unless it was announced today; I haven't heard — but we don't know what the long-term federal situation is with respect to this institution.

So again, Minister Reiter and his relationship through First Nations and Métis relations raises those issues with his counterpart. He's talked to Minister Valcourt on a number of occasions.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the relationship of the ministry to the board, is there still a member of the ministry that's on the board in some kind of capacity, be it non-voting or . . . I guess who's the liaison? Or does that even exist anymore?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Well the deputy minister meets with the president of FNUC once a month to provide that liaison, but I'm advised we don't have a member on the board any longer.

Mr. McCall: — I guess second to that in terms of the oversight arrangement with the University of Regina, what is the status of that arrangement? And is there some view to it coming to an end?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — There was a three-year agreement entered into that expires in 2017. We're going to get the exact month for you. The officials don't have the exact month that the First Nations University has with the University of Regina. And then under the ministry's action plan on accountability and governance, the Brown Governance current state inventory of governance policies and practices provided a thorough review of First Nations University, and they have to provide ongoing accountability metrics to the University of Regina that the ministry officials also check through to ensure that they're meeting those accountability metrics.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for the information, and thank you for the undertaking. I guess moving on, regional colleges, certainly as evidenced by the visit from the Chairs and the CEOs [chief executive officer] in the gallery, there's been a fair amount of turnover on the senior leadership of those institutions within the past couple of years. Anything that the minister or officials would like to say about regional colleges and activities that are reflected both in the line item and in terms of the work of that key part of the sector going forward?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Okay. Just in general about the regional college system is that they take great pride in the types of programs that they deliver in their local communities. As you well know, they may have a main campus in the town of Nipawin but have satellite campuses around the northeastern part of the province. Certainly in the Northwest, they have a main campus in North Battleford with another campus up at Meadow Lake and satellite offices offering programs either through high schools or other physical facilities.

There has been a great emphasis on enhancing offerings to First Nations and reaching out to First Nations individuals, either through the adult basic education program and getting them back into a learning process, if you will, in completing ABE, and then typically when they have a lot of these students in the ABE program is where they get them into a post-secondary program.

What I've encouraged these organizations to do is to be as nimble as they possibly can in reacting as quickly as they possibly can to market labour demands as things change, and not just germane to their own specific area of the province but that if they can deliver a program that can be offered anywhere in the province or that's needed anywhere in the province, then they ought to do that.

I've also emphasized that we're not in competition with each other. There is one student and one taxpayer in the province, and I say that in the sense that we're in the business of educating individuals in specific areas as they want to develop themselves in the post-secondary sector. We ought not be competing with each other in trying to attract that student by telling you, my institution is better than your institution or my program is better than your program. Is that what's best for the student? What's best for the learner in being able to . . . From an affordability perspective and from where they can live and access post-secondary education, how do we deliver those programs in the communities without having to have people show up in the larger communities and move and, in some cases, move their families to go there?

[16:30]

So I've challenged them to try to find ways to deliver that distance education, if you will, into more and more communities in the province, and they've taken that challenge. I've also challenged them that where we can we ought to be offering more enhanced programs in these physical locations, that if you wanted to become a doctor that you could take, you know, university-accredited programs in your pre-med, so to speak, disciplines prior to having to go to medical school in Saskatoon or wherever.

So I'm of the view and my discussions with them have been, how do we provide more accessibility to post-secondary educational opportunities throughout Saskatchewan? And that's where the regional college presidents are focused.

We've got some — you're quite correct — there's been some turnover, albeit we've got some longstanding presidents. I think even you noted Dr. Myers's services in Yorkton, and she'll be retiring here in June, and so there will be a new president there. But I think of Dr. Tom Weegar who's at Cumberland College,

based in Nipawin, who came from BC [British Columbia] and the BC college system, who brings a lot of energy and enthusiasm and some really unique ideas to things that we could adopt from his experiences both in the States and in BC.

What I've said to them is, you know, we're not stuck in our ways, so to speak, as that I'm interested in ideas. I'm interested in program delivery. If they have ideas of doing things differently, by all means we're going to be receptive to talking about those things. We may not necessarily implement them, or perhaps we can't afford them at this particular time, but I want to talk about them. So that's what we've been challenging these educational leaders to do.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the different . . . And again I agree with much of what the minister is saying as regards the regional college system. But as regards the staff that are delivering the educational opportunities, I've got a pretty good idea of where the different collective bargaining agreements are in other places in the sector. What does this budget mean for the regional college system in terms of their labour relations environment?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — I'm advised that the faculty members that deliver the programs through the regional college system are in the midst of a four-year agreement that expires August 31st, 2016. So whatever contractual negotiations were completed, the regional college systems provide that funding through their allocation.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Minister, for that. Is there any work that's ongoing with Lakeland College in particular as regards the whole question of the contribution that the Government of Saskatchewan makes to the operations of that institution and the benefit that accrues to Saskatchewan citizens?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Well I've not visited Lakeland since I became minister. I've certainly been visited by the MLAs from Lakeland or Lloydminster, both the previous MLA and the current MLA. I've not had a formal request from Lakeland senior administration or board with respect to their funding arrangement with our province. We do provide I think in the neighbourhood of 1.22 million on an annual basis to Lakeland, but there is no question that both their campus sites in Lloydminster on the Alberta side and in Vermillion that they have a number of Saskatchewan students attending there.

Now that being said, and I'm not being flippant about this, is that we have a number of students in Saskatchewan that attend educational institutions right around the world, if you will, certainly other universities in Canada. And we don't send funding to those provinces to deal with those students. They are charged I'm assuming an appropriate tuition level to help cover the costs of the program delivery there. But I think it's fair to say that I just haven't had a real strong lobby from that institution to increase funding. Both provinces obviously are going through some difficult financial challenges.

The students that are from Saskatchewan who attend Lakeland College are eligible for the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship and for the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship dollars, so they take full advantage of

it. I get a number of thank you cards or letters from students who have received SIOS funding, Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship funding, thanking the government for those dollars, and those are always fun to receive because we know that they're taking full advantage of that kind of funding. But I'll just leave it at that.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Minister. In terms of work that has been done around the governance piece of regional colleges, and certainly we've had in recent history some problems encountered there, you know, it seems to be working itself through. But where is the whole governance piece as it relates to the regional college sector?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — I thank the member for the question, Mr. Chair. With respect to the seven different regional colleges and their boards, the ministry receive . . . When a member leaves the board because their term is up, there is a competency matrix that the board is required to fill out that the ministry keeps on file. And when nominees are submitted from the respective areas for filling a vacant position, we obviously do our due diligence to ensure that that individual meets the competencies that are identified in the matrix or at least fulfills a number of the requirements, maybe not all of them, with respect to the different types of skill sets you're looking for.

Once appointed to the board, the members are required to take a governance course, the governor development and certification program. It's a four-module, eight-day course that all directors are required to take to better understand their role as a member of the respective boards.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Mr. Minister. I guess moving along through the allocations under consideration, post-secondary capital transfers, the minister referenced it in his opening remarks. Anything else you'd care to add at this time? And I'll have some follow-up questions for that.

Ms. Greenberg: — I'll first outline the increases. Capital, between last year and this year there was a 43 per cent increase, which is a \$14.63 million increase, and there is a number of things that caused this increase. First there is a \$3 million increase in funding for faculty, for facility maintenance and renewal, which creates a total of \$23.6 million. And I can go through, but that is split through the institutions.

Second, there is an increase of \$9.628 million for continuing the renovation and expansion of the Southeast College in Weyburn. Third, there's a \$1.402 million increase for a total budget of 7.9 to complete components of the Health Science facility at the University of Saskatchewan. And that is the basis of the increase.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. I guess a couple of questions, and first would be the University of Regina. I have occasion to be out on campus certainly more there than any other of the other post-secondary institutions in the province. The increase to the maintenance and repair budget, what will that do to the number of roofs that are leaking at the University of Regina? I think it is something like 50-plus roofs that are leaking and you can sort of hop from bucket to bucket through the institution. Will that problem be remedied by year-end?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — I'm advised we don't have a list from the university. They will provide a list as to what they intend to do with their PMR dollars. As they set their budget now, they will provide a list to the ministry as to where they intend to spend the \$5.086 million that's allocated to them this year, which is a 10 per cent increase from last year. Whether that meets all of their demands or not, I can't tell you that. I suspect — well I don't suspect; I know — if the university put together all of their asks with respect to the PMR dollars that they would want on campus, it would be a lot higher than the \$5.086 million.

We also have a \$3 million fund that we've set aside that's designated for PMR as well that all institutions can apply to, but they have to match the dollars. So if they apply for a specific project that costs \$100,000, maybe they get 50 from us and they have to provide 50 through reallocation of dollars on their own budgets that they can have access to. So all of the institutions have been made aware of that and they will go through their list and make application, I think. Well I know the university president at Regina made reference to that in her budget day interview.

So I'm advised that it could take two or three months before we get the list for what they're applying for and what they intend to use their dollars for.

Mr. McCall: — The minister will undertake to provide that to the committee when it should emerge?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Sure.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much. I guess on the broader question on capital generally with the University of Regina, over the past five years what's the grant been like to the University of Regina in terms of capital dollars flowing?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — So the University of Regina on a capital basis: '07-08, because it overlapped both governments, was \$800,000; and then in '08-09, 6.2 million; '09-10, 23.4 million; '10-11, 13.1 million; '11-12, zero; '12-13, 2.8 million; '13-14, 4 million; '14-15, 5 million; and '15-16, 5.1 million, for a total of 59.6 million over the last number of years you've asked about.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for the answer there, Mr. Minister. In terms of where things are at with the residence and where things are at with the College Avenue campus, could the minister describe where those two projects are with regards to the government's radar?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Yes. I think it's fair to say that the university, in their representation to government for their asks this year, did ask for additional dollars for the residence, and that was not available in this year's budget. We had said that we would provide \$11 million towards that project. \$11 million has gone out the door and I'm sure you, like I, see it coming to completion every single day you drive by there. They're going to have students in that residence this fall, I think maybe even in the summertime for summertime programs.

[16:45]

With respect to the College Avenue campus, there was no

dollars in this budget, this year's budget, for capital allocation to the College Avenue campus project. What I've said to the University of Regina is that I will continue to advocate for that particular project. They need to do some more work with respect to their business planning on exactly how many dollars they need. I know there's been some figures bandied about in the media, but they haven't done a full case business plan as to what they need specific dollars for and what they intend to do with those renovations. I think you'll see something from the university here shortly with respect to a request for proposals on that, precisely what I'm talking about.

I know that they continue to do their fundraising, and their board Chair and president have kept me abreast of where they're at with respect to their fundraising and the other types of sources of revenue they may be looking for to assist with that College Avenue renewal. You know, frankly I'm a fan of it. I've toured it. I'm sure you've toured it and been involved in a number of different events there. And if I could've found dollars this year, I would've tried to get that through cabinet. We didn't have the dollars this year.

Mr. McCall: — The university put out a RFP earlier, early in the new year, and then revoked the RFP related to the College Avenue project. What happened there, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Well I think what happened there is that you'd have to ask the university president. I think she's on record as saying that they went out in error and she had not authorized it to go out. I was attending an event at the university I think the same day that she was doing media on it, and she met at me at the door when I came to the event and apologized profusely for it going out. And I said, well that's, you know, that's internal university matters. You determine when you're doing these kinds of things. If, you know, I think if I get into the gist of your question, if you think government had anything to do with it being pulled back, we absolutely did not, and that was a university decision. And as I said, I think you're going to hear from the university here in the very near future, retendering that.

Mr. McCall: — Thank for that, Mr. Minister. In terms of the 7.9 million for the Health Sciences facility at the University of Saskatchewan, if you could tell the committee about that, that allocation. And I guess it'll get us into a broader question about what's being carried by the university as regards debt and questions thereof.

Ms. Bloor Cavers: — In response to your question, in budget 2015-16 there was 7.9 million allocated to support the construction of the U of S Health Sciences project. So that's intended to support renovations of the B wing and that's slated for completion by the fall of 2016 for academic use.

Mr. McCall: — How does that relate to earlier exchanges between monies that I guess . . . How does this relate to the whole question of the debt load of the University of Saskatchewan?

Ms. Bloor Cavers: — Specifically to the amount that was given this year? Is that your question?

Mr. McCall: — Yes, specifically to the amount that was given

this year or in terms of in the immediate history, amounts that were assumed by the university's debt load.

Ms. Bloor Cavers: — Each year government makes a determination of how much capital there is available to allocate to the institution, so that portion is allocated on an annual basis. This portion goes towards that component of the Academic Health Sciences. So that is for construction of that piece. It doesn't relate to university debt.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. I thank the official for the answer. In terms of the Innovation and Science Fund and the science and technology research line items, if the minister or officials could tell us what's happening there, if they've been moved in the overall budget. What's going on there?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Well I noted with great interest on budget day your news release. Your caucus news release indicated that they were eliminated, and that's unfortunate because they were not eliminated. They were transferred over to Innovation Saskatchewan.

Several different funds that would have originated out of my ministry that support organizations like VIDO-InterVac [Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-international vaccine centre] and CLS [Canadian Light Source] at the University of Saskatchewan were more appropriately being allocated or should have been allocated through Innovation Saskatchewan that have, I think, the expertise to deal with not only understanding some of the projects that are going on there at the university, but certainly some of the research dollars that academics are applying for that could be matched with federal dollars or how the monies are allocated based on the types of research projects that they were doing.

In a lot of cases, ministry officials who had responsibility for that would seek guidance and advice from Innovation Saskatchewan officials as to the appropriateness of allocating dollars for specific types of projects. And they really have the scientific background, if you will, to evaluate those programs. And so government made the decision to transfer those dollars over to Innovation Saskatchewan to be managed by them. So obviously an error on the opposition's part on budget day, but that's where those dollars are.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for the clarification, Mr. Minister. As regards the innovation research agenda broadly, one of the ways of keeping score of this of course is with the Canada Research Chairs for different pursuits, accessing of the different tri-council research dollars. Where are we at in terms of Saskatchewan living up to its potential in terms of these innovative folks that are working at the different institutions through the province? Is the minister satisfied with where we're at, or is there . . . What's the game plan going forward?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Well I think it's . . . The short answer is no, I'm not satisfied. I think that we've got two outstanding institutions here in their own respective right. They certainly have, one could argue, at the University of Regina they have a core couple of programs that ought to be recognized for excellence in Canada and ought to attract more research dollars.

At the University of Saskatchewan you could argue there's

other programs, certainly in the health sciences field or the medical doctoral side of it with respect to all of the different professional health sciences being available at that university, and certainly agriculture, it being the backbone of our economy, and we should be a world leader in attracting research dollars.

I think that in conversations I've had with the University of Regina president, albeit she's proud of what they've accomplished for a small university — and I think they punch above their weight, so to speak, with the number of research dollars they are able to attract and the research, the quality of the research that's put out by academics on that campus is certainly well recognized — but they, by her own admission, could be doing more and ought to be doing more, and we need to work with them to . . . As a matter of fact, I had a meeting with my officials not that long ago to talk about where our government could play a role, whether it's the Premier or myself, in our travels in meeting with folks certainly at the federal level, but in meeting with entrepreneurs or those who invest in these kinds of things. If we could be doing more to attract private sector dollars into our institutions, we ought to be doing more of that.

At the University of Saskatchewan, I think it's fair to say that, as you well know, they're in the midst of finding a new president. That search is actively under way. There is a search committee struck by the board of governors. And when a new president comes on . . . I think that we started some of that work with the interim president, the interim provost, but it really has to be owned by the top leaders of that institution. So whoever the new president is, he or she, I think it should become a focus for them with respect to attracting research dollars, and where government can play a role.

I want to learn more about and understand more where we can play a role. We ought to be doing more. So am I satisfied? No. I think that there are those that certainly whisper in my ear that say we could be doing a lot more, and I want to see us do a lot more . . . That's for the University of Regina, yes. My deputy just reminds me, the University of Regina ranked no. 1 in international research collaboration. And I think you've probably seen this news release from last October. And Dr. Malloy who's just been appointed VP [vice-president] of research at the University of Regina I think briefed cabinet. We were over at the University of Regina last fall. He did a presentation to cabinet and wants to do more. I met with him at a function. He wants to come and visit with me and talk about that more.

The other component to this is our international, the attraction of international dollars. And it's part of our international education strategy, and it's where we can work with other countries or other academics through MITACS [mathematics of information technology and complex systems] and other vehicles to attract research dollars to Saskatchewan. We ought to be doing that.

And we've had our first International Education Council meeting with all the respective presidents and student presidents, and student representative, I should say, who is the president of the University of Regina Students' Union who was re-elected and so will serve for another year. And it's one of the areas, that one, of our three major strategic initiatives under that

council.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that. And then certainly as regards . . . What's the role of Saskatchewan Polytechnic? In the transition from SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] to Sask Poly, one of the reasons that was promoted for this was that this would better enable the institution to access research dollars across the country. I guess one, has that materialized, or what is the status of that? And then two, what has the institution been able to accomplish in the last year that it previously wasn't able to accomplish as SIAST?

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — So I think it's a little bit early yet to determine. Just by virtue of changing from SIAST to a polytechnic, you know, has it opened up the doors of a lot of new dollars coming in? The answer is no. I think that the strategic plan of the president there, Dr. Rosia . . . If you haven't met with him, you should meet with him. As a leader in our post-secondary education system in this province, he has some . . . he's a real visionary and he has some aggressive plans for what that institution can and should be doing, and not the least of which is attracting more research dollars, particularly in applied research area.

And so as this institution is evolving and changing, he doesn't worry so much about the international side because there's enough students here in the province of Saskatchewan from a student perspective to fill every classroom that we have in that institution. And so he's focused on trying to accommodate Saskatchewan-based students, as opposed to being part of . . . He is part of the international education strategic council, but his focus is much more here in Saskatchewan. But on the research side, he is interested in collaborating with other polytechnics where they can exchange faculty. And the transfer of faculty and certainly credits amongst these institutions is much easier now.

We are the only polytechnic that is a polytechnic by virtue of legislation in Canada. I didn't realize that, even when the time was we were changing the institution to that. He advises me that now, that other provinces or other institutions are saying, how did you get the government to put you in the legislation to do that? So I think it remains to be seen. It's a good question. We're going to be following that, and I know Dr. Rosia is developing a strategic plan that not only talks about the delivery of programs and services to students to meet labour market demands, but certainly enhancing research opportunities.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for that response. And lest it be said that I'm not a legislator of my word, we're rapidly approaching the agreed-upon hour of adjournment. Certainly we've got much more to talk about. Graduate retention program in particular, I'm sure we'll have an interesting discussion of that coming up. But at this point, Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the minister and officials for joining us here today for the consideration of these Advanced Education estimates.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Mr. Chair, if I might, just before we leave, we found out the expiration of the advisory services agreement with First Nations University is March 31st, 2017, so it's got another full year to go. And with that, Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank my colleague, Mr. McCall, for the very good questions, and colleagues for their attentiveness, and certainly

officials. I know that we have some more time, I think next week. Or not next week, week after, in deliberating some more. So I look forward to that and I thank you, Mr. Chair, for your indulgence.

The Chair: — Seeing that it is past the hour of adjournment, this committee stands adjourned until April 2nd, 2015, at 1:30 p.m.

[The committee adjourned at 17:00.]