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Participants

Ministry of Advanced Education

Carmen Baldwin-Dery, Assistant Deputy Minister, Post-secondary Policy and Strategy

Curtis Clarke, Deputy Minister

Mike Fernandez, Assistant Deputy Minister, Apprenticeship and Student Aid

Warren Singh, Executive Director, Operations

Brad Smith, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Corporate Services

8 a.m.

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

[Ms Phillips in the chair]

The Chair: All right. Good morning, everyone. I have 8 a.m. I will call this meeting to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Shannon Phillips. I'm the MLA for Lethbridge-West and the chair of the Public Accounts Committee. Under ordinary circumstances we would just go around the room for all participants to introduce ourselves, but with everyone joining us by various means, I will note for the record that the following members are present either via videoconference or via teleconference: we have Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk on videoconference, we have Garth Rowswell on videoconference, Peter Singh on videoconference, Searle Turton via videoconference, and Jordan Walker via videoconference. Additionally, we have Auditor General Doug Wylie and Assistant Auditor General Rob Driesen joining us by videoconference as well.

We'll now go around the room for the members who are present in the room to introduce themselves.

Mr. Guthrie: MLA Pete Guthrie, Airdrie-Cochrane.

Mr. Neudorf: MLA Nathan Neudorf, Lethbridge-East.

Ms Lovely: MLA Jackie Lovely, Camrose constituency.

Mr. Schmidt: Marlin Schmidt, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

Ms Pancholi: Good morning. Rakhi Pancholi, MLA, Edmonton-Whitemud.

Mr. Kulicki: Good morning. Michael Kulicki, clerk of committees and research services.

Mr. Roth: Good morning. Aaron Roth, committee clerk.

The Chair: We have a number of officials joining us from Advanced Education. What I'll do for the officials is just say that what we find the best way to do this, now that we don't have people in the room, is just to say your name before you begin speaking, just so that *Hansard* can ensure that we have the comments attributed to the right person.

I will just go on to a few other housekeeping items. Obviously, in accordance with the recommendations of the chief medical officer, participants are advised to leave the appropriate distance between themselves and other members. In addition, I would remind everyone of the committee room protocols, which require members to wear masks in committee rooms and while seated except when speaking, at which time they may choose to wear masks. However, we are finding that *Hansard* is picking us up just fine, so you may choose to keep it on.

Hansard will operate your microphones for you, so you do not need to press any buttons. However, folks who are joining us by videoconference, please mute yourselves after you finish speaking and unmute yourselves before you start. At least someone will violate this – usually it's me – but that, of course, is the protocol here. We are audio- and videostreaming meetings, all transcripts can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website, and we are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV.

Friends, we'll now move on to the approval of the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the agenda?

I'm looking to the room for someone to move a motion that the agenda for the April 13 meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed.

Mr. Schmidt: So moved.

The Chair: So moved by Member Schmidt. Is there any discussion on this motion?

Seeing none, before the committee votes, members joining us online, can you unmute your microphones. All in favour? Are there any opposed? Seeing none, that motion is carried. Please remute.

We'll move on to the approval of the minutes. We have minutes from our April 6 meeting. Do members have any errors or omissions to note?

Seeing none, I'm looking to the room for a member to move. Thank you. Member Neudorf moves that the minutes of the April 6 meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed. Is there any discussion on this motion? Seeing none, all in favour? Are there any opposed? Thank you. That motion is carried.

We'll move now on to item 4 in our agenda. Friends, the members of the subcommittee on committee business have put forward a suggested change to our spring 2021 calendar. The proposed change was provided to committee members last week via the committee's internal website. The proposal is to invite the Ministry of Community and Social Services to attend our committee on May 18 rather than the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the idea being that Agriculture and Forestry will move to our subsequent agenda, whenever the subcommittee decides that that might be.

At this time I would open the floor to any comments or possible motions that members may wish to bring forward.

Mr. Schmidt: I just want to thank members of the government for supporting this motion. We here in the Official Opposition have long held that it's in the public interest to have Community and Social Services come to speak to the committee, you know, and I'm really glad to see that the Public Accounts Committee is deciding to reduce partisanship here in this room and work in the public interest. I think that this expression of bipartisanship, by bringing Community and Social Services to the committee in May, is a good thing for the people of Alberta, so thank you for agreeing to that.

The Chair: Well, that's all very nice, Member Schmidt, but we need a motion.

I'm looking to the room for someone to move the motion that the standing committee approve the revised committee schedule.

Ms Lovely: So moved, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I see that moved by Member Lovely. Is there any discussion on the motion?

Mr. Schmidt: I'll just reiterate my . . .

The Chair: I think that we're good. Thank you.

All right. All in favour? All right. Any opposed? Thank you. That motion is carried. Thank you, friends.

Now we will turn things over to the Ministry of Advanced Education. I'd like to welcome our guests, who are here to address the office of the Auditor General outstanding recommendations and the ministry's annual report of 2019-20. Now we will turn things over to the Ministry of Advanced Education to provide opening remarks not exceeding 10 minutes.

Just to reiterate, friends, we are in our ordinary two-hour meeting block. We are not in the in-session two-hour meeting because we don't have a sitting imminently this morning.

It's 10 minutes for the Ministry of Advanced Ed, and your time starts when you start talking.

Dr. Clarke: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you for this opportunity to talk about Advanced Education and our work with our partners at postsecondary institutions. I also want to thank everyone at the office of the Auditor General. I truly appreciate my working relationship with Mr. Driesen. He and his team have truly been a joy to work with.

Also, I wish to take a moment to acknowledge the outstanding strength and resiliency of the postsecondary community over the past year. Under challenging and unprecedented circumstances our institutions, faculty, students, and staff have shown tremendous agility, innovation, and leadership to find new ways to deliver classes and support student learning. While we continue to work together to navigate the unique challenges created by COVID-19, there is reason for optimism.

Now, without further ado, I would like to provide a brief overview of our department and highlight some of our accomplishments as outlined in the 2019-20 annual report. For 2019-20, Advanced Education's consolidated ministry expense is more than \$6 billion, which includes funding for 21 public postsecondary institutions, limited funding for five independent academic institutions, and financial supports for students. Last year Advanced Education provided more than \$652 million in Alberta student loans and \$60 million in grants to support more than 98,000 students. This was 5.8 per cent more students than in the 2018-19 year. The department has also supported more than 50,000 students by providing nearly \$97 million in scholarships and awards, including introducing two new scholarships, the Alex Decoteau award of honour, to support veterans as they transition from military service to other careers, and the high school apprenticeship scholarship program, to help more high school students continue their apprenticeship education.

In fact, one of our key strategies in 2019-20 was to enhance apprenticeship and skilled trades opportunities and empower more Albertans to pursue rewarding careers in the trades. To help accomplish this, Advanced Education appointed the Skills for Jobs Task Force in September 2019. The Skills for Jobs Task Force included members from industry, labour, K to 12 and postsecondary education, and community agencies. The task force submitted the recommendations in September 2020, and their recommendations will guide future Advanced Education initiatives to support skills development and apprenticeship education.

In addition to the work of the task force, the ministry continued to support organizations that help Albertans pursue careers in the skilled trades professions, including committing funding to Careers: the Next Generation of more than \$6 million by '22-23 to provide programming in more than a thousand schools across the province, providing Skills Canada \$2 million in 2019-20 so that more promising young Albertans can explore careers in the trades and display their talent on the world stage, and providing Women Building Futures \$2.5 million in 2019-20 to support more women and help reduce the gender gap in the skilled trades professions.

8:10

This funding is part of a \$10 million commitment over the four years. It is essential that postsecondary education equip students with the skills they need to be successful, whatever their chosen profession, and provide employers and job creators the talent they need to grow our economy.

Another key department goal in 2019-20 was to build an adult learning system that is efficient, effective, and well positioned to meet Alberta's evolving needs, to provide a road map and long-term direction for Alberta's postsecondary system. In early 2020 the department began a comprehensive, system-wide review through Alberta 2030: building skills for jobs. Alberta 2030 will provide a transformational vision and direction for Alberta's higher education system and establish an exciting path forward.

To lay the groundwork for transformational change, it is also critical that we free postsecondary institutions to innovate and compete. Indeed, this is a key Advanced Education priority in 2019-20. The minister is committed to finding ways to streamline processes and reduce red tape, enabling institutions to find efficiencies and ways to innovate and grow. These efforts are part of a government-wide goal to reduce duplicative and unnecessary regulations by one-third. Advanced Education exceeded the 2019-20 target, with a 7.1 per cent reduction of regulatory requirements. The department continues to work with stakeholders to identify ways to reduce red tape and streamline processes for the benefit of institutions, job creators, and students.

These are just some of the highlights of the 2019-20 annual report and the work the department undertook to build a strong and effective adult learning system.

In Advanced Education we strive to continuously improve outcomes for Albertans and ensure efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars. That's why we appreciate the work of the Auditor General and the comprehensive review the annual report provides. I'm pleased to say that the 2019 report had no new recommendations to the department. The department has implemented two outstanding recommendations: first, an integrated enterprise risk management framework to identify and mitigate relevant risks; second, improvements to review processes for travel, meal, and hospitality expenses.

There are four recommendations outstanding, and I'm happy to say that we have made progress on one of the two related to for-profit and cost-recovery ventures. On April 1, 2019, the department developed a new policy on alternative revenues to address these recommendations. Since that time we have been working on implementation, and when new projects come forward, we expect to be able to demonstrate how the policy is working in practice. The remaining two recommendations, related to collaborative initiatives among postsecondary institutions, will be addressed through the Alberta 2030: building skills for jobs review and strategy.

Alberta 2030 will lay the groundwork for a strategic plan and system direction over the next 10 years. The strategy identifies six key goals, including modernizing governance of the system in order to increase collaboration and drive outcomes to ensure the student experience is co-ordinated and integrated. The department hopes to share the strategy and begin implementation of outcomes later this year. We are confident the work of Alberta 2030 will address the outstanding Auditor General recommendations to the department.

In conclusion, public trust is vital for our postsecondary system, and this is the collective responsibility of the boards of governors at each postsecondary institution, senior administrators, and government officials. Albertans deserve accountability and transparency from each of us, and for that reason I appreciate the committee's time as well as your questions.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you to the Deputy Minister of Advanced Education for those opening remarks.

I will now turn things over to the office of the Auditor General. Mr. Wylie, you have five minutes.

Mr. Wylie: Well, good morning. Thank you very much. I appreciate the comments of the deputy and the working relationship we have with you, Deputy, and your team. It makes our work that much easier, so we very much appreciate the co-operation and collaboration we have with your team.

Now, our work within the ministry includes work at the department as well as 20 postsecondary education institutes. We issue Auditor's opinions on the 20 PSIs, and the work that we do at the department is necessary for us to issue an opinion on the financial statements of the consolidated financial statements. I'm pleased to report that all of our audits on the PSIs resulted in a clean or an unqualified audit opinion. That's excellent news. The work on the PSIs: we do issue a separate report to the Legislative Assembly that summarizes our findings and observations from our work, both financial statement work and any performance audit work that we do within the PSIs.

Our most recent report was issued, actually, last month, March '21. In that report we actually put together a dashboard that tries to make it easy for the users to get a snapshot of how we see things within the sector. We break down the findings, if you will, in that snapshot by financial statement summaries, looking at the timeliness of the preparation of the financial statements as well as the accuracy or reliability of the information that's making its way into the financial statements, and then we provide a dashboard on the outstanding recommendations and the progress being made by the institutions. That provides a bit of a snapshot of the sector overall, as I said.

I will tell you that the snapshot has a lot of green on it as compared to in past years. That's good. Nevertheless, we have 11 outstanding recommendations with the PSIs, and we're looking forward to successful resolution of those matters and working with the management and boards of the individual institutions to seek full resolution of those matters. The deputy just referred to the outstanding recommendations at the department. Again, we're looking forward to working with the deputy and his staff to assess progress, and we will come in and do our follow-up work whenever the department indicates that they're ready for us to do so.

Yeah. I think I'll just leave it there for now, Chair. I would like to note that Rob Driesen, Assistant Auditor General, is on the call with me this morning. He has oversight for this sector. He'll be able to provide some comments should any questions come our way.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for those opening comments.

I think we'll now proceed to questions from committee members for our guests. We have our first rotation of 15 minutes each. We will begin with the Official Opposition side. I am looking over to the Official Opposition. We have Member Schmidt to lead off the questioning. Member Schmidt, your time begins when you begin speaking.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you very much. I want to focus my questions in this first block on issues around student aid and affordability of education, which are talked about extensively on pages 20 and 21. The department has made a number of changes to the affordability of advanced education in the '19-20 year. They ended the tuition freeze, cancelled the tuition tax credits, and increased the interest rate on student loans. You know, the annual report says that Advanced Education supports "access to post-secondary education through reducing financial barriers." I'm wondering if the department did any analysis in this year on what the overall impact on affordability and access – the financial barriers that may have been created because of a number of these changes.

Dr. Clarke: Thank you, sir. I will pass that question off to Assistant Deputy Minister Mike Fernandez, whose division oversees the student finance elements.

Mike.

8:20

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you very much, Curtis, and good morning, committee. Thanks for the question. There are a number of things that the department is doing because affordability and access to postsecondary education are important outcomes that we are accountable to help deliver on behalf of the province. As of March 31 the student aid loan portfolio had a net value of about \$3.2 billion, and clearly we understand that what is needed is a solid understanding and careful stewardship of that loan portfolio as it's an important sort of lever to help enable Albertans to participate in postsecondary education.

There are a number of activities that we have had under way to help us both understand the portfolio and make a portfolio risk. We do undertake regular analysis of the portfolio. We have an analyst on staff who annually takes a deep dive into the portfolio to look for trends and risks. The outcome of that identification, you know, gives us advice from a policy perspective about where we should toggle scholarships, grants, awards, and loan eligibility criteria, if you will. Additionally, we are the deliverers of a large portion of the Canada student loan program. Similarly, they undertake annual analysis to make sure that the policy levers and the awards that the federal government is offering to support Albertans attending postsecondary are adjusted, too. They make policy decisions, and then we would go forward and implement those policy decisions as a part of our program delivery.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Madam Chair, I mean, it's all well and good to talk about the risk to the student loan portfolio. Fair enough. I mean, I know that the ADM has a responsibility to make sure that the government doesn't have financial risk, but he didn't actually answer any of the questions that I asked about the financial barriers that students face to achieving access. Like, what measures of financial barriers or access does the department have when they're assessing the affordability of advanced education?

Mr. Fernandez: Member, we do not have formal measures at this point that would measure the metric as per the question that you just asked.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Is it fair to say, then, that we've increased significantly the cost of advanced education without fully understanding how that may impact the ability of Albertans to be able to pay for that education, that we really don't have any idea what these changes have done to the affordability of education in Alberta?

Mr. Fernandez: I'm sorry, Member. I can't speak to sort of the increases to any of the education. I am accountable for the student aid portfolio, and as I indicated, we undertake an annual review of the portfolio and those tools to help make sure that they're best situated to support students that want to make use of them to attend postsecondary.

Mr. Schmidt: What was the annual cost of cancelling the tuition tax credit for families? I guess two questions to that: how much more, now, will families have to pay because the tuition and education tax credits have been cancelled, and what does that save the government, I guess, annually?

Mr. B. Smith: Good morning, Chair. Brad Smith, assistant deputy minister, financial services. We'll get that information for you, Member, right away.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you. Is the ADM committing to tabling that to the committee after the fact? Is that my understanding?

Mr. B. Smith: We will research that, Member.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Thank you very much.

In the '19-20 year Advanced Education formally lifted the tuition cap that the previous government had implemented. Did the department do any analysis on what the increases in average tuition will be as a result of that?

Dr. Clarke: Yes. As a matter of fact, we did. We looked at the effect of the tuition fees on the system, and on average tuition makes up roughly 27 per cent to 30 per cent of the cost. Alberta's average tuition is lower than the national average, and that was one of the things that we were looking at as we looked at the increase. For example, the average undergraduate tuition in Alberta is \$6,372 in 2021, and the average at the national level is \$6,610. The average international undergraduate tuition in Alberta is \$27,714, and the national average is \$32,041. Again, we continue to stay under the national average even with the changes. When tuition and fees are combined, the cost per student in an undergraduate program is still less than the national average, so when we were looking at those increases, we were paying attention to what the national averages were to ensure that Alberta was still competitive in that context.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay.

The Chair: Just to ensure there's clarity on what the Public Accounts Committee is here to do, we're looking at the '19-20 annual report and outstanding Auditor General recommendations. When we are asking questions, hon. members, we're making sure that we're querying – and this is for the benefit of the department as well – that we are talking about the analysis that was done in that particular fiscal year, not what is happening now, just for clarity.

Mr. Schmidt: Great.

Page 21 of the annual report talks about the scholarship transformation project. I'm trying to make it not so open-ended a question because I know that the executive at Advanced Education could fill all of the time allotted on this project. Can you give me a sense of what changes were made to the scholarship and award system with an eye to affordability? I guess, let me frame the question a little bit for you guys. Prior to this transformation project there was a certain percentage of the total scholarships and awards that was based on merit – academic merit, sports merit, those kinds of things – and then there was a certain amount that was based on need. What was the breakdown before the transformation project, and, I guess, what was the breakdown after the transformation project? If we could kind of focus it to that lens.

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you. As a part of the government's future ready strategy and the review of the tuition and the system resourcing that was approved back in 2016, Advanced Education conducted an online survey as well as stakeholder dialogue sessions with students, student organizations, and postsecondary educational institutions to determine what shifts would make sense to occur within the program. Feedback from stakeholder dialogue sessions indicated some support for shifting funding from primarily providing scholarships for academic achievement to funding more awards to incent access and participation to a broader range of

students. Stakeholders felt that it was quite important for government to expand the breadth of award programming to incent access and participation and reward those students that are excelling in other ways.

I'm sorry; we don't have the data, you know, the quantified metrics, that you asked about pre and post those decisions. I'd be happy to table.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Sorry; can you table that?

Mr. Fernandez: Yes.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you very much.

Now, I notice on page 73 of the annual report that it shows the lapse and encumbrance in the different spending lines in the Department of Advanced Education budget. Line 4.2 shows that almost \$2 million that was allotted for scholarships and awards wasn't spent. Can you explain why that money wasn't spent?

Mr. B. Smith: Good morning, Chair. The savings were due to the deferral of the new veteran's scholarship until the '20-21 year and the cancellation of the grant to Volunteer Alberta as well as decreases in the number of recipients for that. There was a small lapse in that because of volume decrease.

8:30

Mr. Schmidt: Sorry. You announced the creation of the veteran's scholarship but deferred payments out of that scholarship fund. Is that my understanding?

Mr. B. Smith: It was deferred until the '20-21 year. That's correct.

Mr. Schmidt: Why?

Mr. B. Smith: Just timing, just a budget decision for Budget '20.

Mr. Schmidt: Feel free to enlighten me, ADM, on what budget decisions and timing would – you know, it's interesting to me that in the annual report the department goes out of its way to talk about the creation of this veteran's scholarship, and then I find out that you didn't pay out any money. What are the specifics of the decision that drove that?

Mr. B. Smith: The other factor that would have influenced that, Member, would have been the short budget year. Budget '19, of course, was tabled in the fall of that year, and the full development of that program was part of Budget '20.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Incredibly disappointing. Was there an in-year savings exercise that the department was asked to undergo that caused this money to be unspent?

Mr. B. Smith: There were in-year savings required of all departments. Advanced Education in the '19-20 budget year had in-year savings requirements as well. That's correct.

Mr. Schmidt: What was the annual in-year savings requirement for the entire Ministry of Advanced Education?

Mr. B. Smith: For the '19-20 year, it was approximately \$18 million, \$19 million.

Mr. Schmidt: Nineteen million dollars. So \$2 million of that came out of scholarships and awards. In what other line items on page 73 would we expect those in-year savings to have shown up?

Mr. B. Smith: In-year savings would have applied to 2.2 as well as 2.4.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. So line 2.2 is the Campus Alberta grant. Treasury Board and Finance was asked to reduce the Campus Alberta grant even more than the budgeted cuts to universities and colleges by \$7 million. Tell me a little bit more about the Campus Alberta innovations reductions of \$3.8 million.

Mr. B. Smith: There was some reduced funding just for some strategic initiatives that were put on hold, that were in that line.

Mr. Schmidt: The ADM should . . .

The Chair: Okay. Very good.

We have now a 15-minute rotation for the government caucus members. We will begin with Member Singh, who is joining us via videoconference. Over to you, Member Singh. Your time starts when you start speaking.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all the ministry officials and staff for being here with us today to provide the committee the ministry's update on the status of the outstanding recommendations from the Auditor General of Alberta. My question is on the Skills for Jobs Task Force. On page 10 of the annual report your ministry speaks to key objective 1.1, where the department looks to "improve the effectiveness of apprenticeship programs, strengthen the apprenticeship model, and expand opportunities for the skilled trades." You mention on the same page that in order to carry out the mandate of the task force, which is "to work with industry, educators, and trades professionals," the task force began an engagement process in fiscal 2019. How did the department approach this engagement to ensure efficient operation to yield the best results?

Dr. Clarke: Thank you, Member. I'd be glad to answer that question. The ministry secured the services of a qualified vendor, Leger Marketing Inc., to conduct the engagement activities, and Leger Inc. was selected through a fair procurement process set out by the communications and public engagement framework. Although the scope of the work was initially broader and the estimated cost was approximately \$500,000, the ministry significantly reduced the scope to focus on engagement activities and also bringing down the cost to \$150,000. Engagement activities were developed in line with the mandate of the Skills for Jobs Task Force. On behalf of the task force Leger Inc. conducted focus groups with high school students, parents, and educators, led industry round-tables with representatives, and set up development of a workbook where the task force members could engage with key systems stakeholders and collect feedback through the written submissions.

As a result of the pandemic, some of these were cancelled, and we needed to replace these activities. What was really interesting about the Leger folks is that they were able to pivot and created an online survey that led to over 1,000 Albertans participating in that process. The engagement activities and the outcomes are outlined in the task force final report that, as I referenced earlier, had been submitted to the minister in September 2020 and publicly released in January 2021.

Mr. Singh: Thanks for answering.

What were the targeted goals for these engagements, and what evaluation metrics were put in place to ensure that these goals were met?

Dr. Clarke: Thank you. Again, we set out nine focus groups, located in Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge, each with eight to 10 participants, so that was a start; three focus groups with high

school students, three focus groups with parents and students, and three focus groups with secondary school teachers; and then eight industry round-tables, located in Calgary, Red Deer, and Edmonton, each with 20 to 25 participants from various economic sectors as well. Then we looked at the workbook submissions available to the task force members so that they could target a set number of written submissions as well.

The outcomes, as a result, we had to change and pivot because of the pandemic. We then had three industry round-tables, five focus groups, 58 written submissions, and an online survey of over 1,000 Albertans representing youth, parents, and employers, and the survey was held between July 2 and 20, 2020.

Mr. Singh: Thank you for answering.

I understand that at the time of this report a final report was being created. Can you describe to the committee how the ministry approached developing the report, and what were the results found in this report?

Dr. Clarke: Well, the interesting part and I think the dynamic aspect of it is that it was the members of the task force, based on the several discussions and the feedback from the various engagements, that actually developed that report, and the results became the report that was tabled to the minister as well. The final report also outlines the recommendations developed by the task force, that range from ways to address Alberta's broader skills development needs, improving and expanding apprenticeship education programs, modernizing governance and roles, enhancing the professionalization of trade professions, and funding incentives. The ministry supported the development of the task force final report by basically providing editorial and publication services, but it was really the task of the task force itself and the work that went into that from the feedback engagement, thus the report that was tabled for the minister.

8:40

Mr. Singh: Thanks for the answers here . . .

The Chair: Member Singh, just one moment. I'm going to bring this conversation back around to the annual report from 2019-20 and the outstanding recommendations from the Auditor General, of which there are a few of a multiyear nature. So there's plenty to query that is in order that is before us today. An engagement that happened in summer of 2020 with a subsequent report in the winter of 2021 is not in order, so we're going to bring this back to what is, okay?

Member Singh, please continue with your questions, provided that they are querying the appropriate subject matter. And I will provide another reminder to the department that that's what we're talking about here today.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for your answers. The department's engagements are indeed a good way to expand and strengthen apprenticeship education opportunities in the skilled trades professions to meet labour demands here.

With that, I will turn it over to MLA Nathan Neudorf.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Member, and thank you, Chair. Continuing on the annual report, going to page 11, just for everyone's reference, and the new high school apprenticeship scholarship program that was created in 2019, your ministry mentions that this program replaces previous scholarships and increased apprenticeship funding to \$1.5 million. So, again, continuing on from Member Schmidt's comments on apprenticeship and scholarships, how did the department identify

the changes that were needed to necessitate the replacement of previous scholarships?

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you very much, Member. Again, this is Mike Fernandez speaking. In the 2019 provincial election platform, prior to forming government, the UCP committed to dedicating \$1 million for trade scholarships for a thousand students that showed promise in trades in high school; \$500,000 of that was already provided for 500 scholarships that would go to graduating high school students who were or are registered apprentices or who had completed either 250 hours of on-the-job training and/or some type of apprenticeship pathway while attending high school.

In order to prevent duplication and to ensure that as many students as possible could receive funding, Advanced Education developed, you know, as you asked, the high school apprenticeship scholarship program, and then we retired our RAP/CTS scholarship. During the development of the high school apprenticeship scholarship program, the department took the opportunity to modernize that process. We've gone from a historically application-based, very manual selection process to an automated selection process.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you for that answer.

So, then, in the creation of that high school apprenticeship scholarship program, can you please provide for the committee: the idea as to what the goals were and how they were determined, what measures were applied to the creation of this program, and what performance metrics were set to ensure that this program is effective and beneficial to Albertans?

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you. Yes. Again, it's Mike Fernandez from Advanced Education speaking. The goals of the new high school apprenticeship scholarship program were determined to be, first of all, wanting to recognize the achievement of either the RAP participation or the CTS apprenticeship pathway completion for those students while achieving an Alberta high school diploma. Additionally, we wanted to create parity of esteem for high school students who choose to pursue the trades as a valuable postsecondary and career option. Additionally, we wanted to provide an incentive for those students to complete both RAP and CTS through dual scholarships at an increased funding amount.

To support those goals, the department modernized the selection process to ensure that 100 per cent of eligible students would have access to the newly formed scholarships. For 2019 only, the eligible graduation year was increased to include up to five years of previous graduates just to ensure that all eligible students would receive that scholarship and that none would have been overlooked as we transitioned between the RAP/CTS program and into the high school apprenticeship scholarship program.

Then from a performance metric perspective and to ensure that we're meeting the goals of the program, we did develop a metric. We're tracking the percentage of recipients that were awarded the high school apprenticeship bright future scholarship as students are incentivized to complete both RAP and CTS, and in 2019 2.4 per cent of all high school apprenticeship scholarships awarded did go to bright future recipients. While the total number of scholarships awarded did decrease in 2020, this actually increased to 2.5 per cent of recipients.

Mr. Neudorf: Okay. Thank you for that.

I think that you've already touched on this a little bit, but can you describe what categorizes as a qualified high school graduate in either the registered apprenticeship program, RAP, which you were talking about, or the career and technology studies, the CTS,

program? Again, can you describe those categories just for clarity for the committee?

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you. Yes. To qualify for the high school apprenticeship scholarship, the student must be an Alberta resident, they must complete the requirements for an Alberta high school diploma in June of their graduating year, they must be registered as an apprentice in the registered apprenticeship program or have successfully completed a career and technology studies apprenticeship pathway through an Alberta high school, and they must not be a previous RAP or CTS scholarship recipient. And then, you know, further, to qualify for the high school apprenticeship scholarship, the bright future side of things, students must meet all of the above requirements that we just walked through, and they have to be registered as an Alberta apprentice in the registered apprenticeship program and have successfully completed a CTS pathway at an Alberta high school. Students who meet all of those criteria will receive a scholarship.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, again, for that answer.

Again, just for clarity for the committee, in this transition period from the previous year to last year, did you say that we saw an increase in students that were accessing this?

Mr. Fernandez: We saw an increase in those students that met the eligibility criteria, yes. It went from 2.4 per cent up to 2.5 per cent.

Mr. Neudorf: Okay. Can you, again, provide for the committee roughly across the province how many students we're talking about? Like, 2.4 per cent, 2.5 per cent: what is the actual number of students that would have been eligible?

Mr. Fernandez: I'm sorry, Member. I don't have that at my fingertips. I would have to follow up to get that number.

Mr. Neudorf: No problem. Thank you.

How does the ministry determine the distribution of the scholarship program to ensure that the money is provided fairly and responsibly across the province?

Mr. Fernandez: The selection process is now automated, so it actually removes the need for students to have to submit a physical application to the department. Again, we're at 100 per cent of all eligible students will have access to this scholarship, and any of those students that meet all of those criteria will receive the scholarship. That funding is distributed by cheques from Alberta Student Aid, and then T4As are submitted to the students at the end of each year.

Mr. Neudorf: Just to follow up on that, are the students, then, notified that they're eligible to have to apply? You say that it's 100 per cent, but you did make some distinction about the uptake of that program. So are they notified when they are eligible, and then they have to respond back to receive the scholarship, or how does that part of the process work?

Mr. Fernandez: Once a student has applied, they'll know in real time through the online application that they've demonstrated that they can meet and tick all of the boxes for those eligibility criteria, and they'd be notified . . .

The Chair: Thank you to ADM Fernandez.

We will move back to the government side after we move on to our second rotation, which is the Official Opposition with a 10-minute block. You may begin.

Mr. Schmidt: Great. Thank you very much. I want to stay on loans and grants for a while if I can. On page 21 of the annual report it says that the effective interest rate on all outstanding student loan balances was raised “from prime to prime plus one percentage point.” Well, how much money did that save the government, or how much additional cost was forced onto students who hold student loans as a result of that decision?

Mr. Fernandez: I’m sorry, Member. We do not have that metric or that data at our fingertips. We would have to endeavour to get back to you after the Public Accounts meeting in our written follow-up to the committee.

8:50

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Thank you for that.

In planning for COVID, it notes that Advanced Education “paused all repayment and interest accrual on student loans for six months, effective March 30, 2020.” Did the department do any projections on how much that would cost the government or how much money that would save students as a result of that move?

Mr. Fernandez: Member, I think the question you’re asking us is actually outside of the time frame and the scope of what we’re being asked at Public Accounts this morning.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, it says that “to support students during COVID-19, Advanced Education also paused all repayment and interest [loans] on student loans for six months, effective March 30, 2020.” That decision was made in the ’19-20 year, so I would argue this is subject to the discussion in the accounts, and surely the department must have had some understanding of what the cost was before they made the decision, or did you just make the decision and figure out what the cost was after the fact?

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you, Member. As you point out, there was one day in which this program did take effect, on March 30, 2020, that is a part of this annual report. All Alberta student loan repayments were paused from March 30, 2020, to September 30, 2020, with no accrual of interest during this period. At the same time, the federal government took the same approach, and they also paused repayment and interest on Canada student loans. The cost to Alberta was \$16.9 million, and that information was included in our ’19-20 actuals.

Mr. Schmidt: In which line would that show up?

Mr. Fernandez: Your question took me into the ’20-21 fiscal year, so you won’t have that information in front of you until next account.

Mr. Schmidt: So it won’t show up until the next annual report, then. Is that correct? Okay. Thank you very much.

Was the decision made to pause this for six months based on – what kind of criteria? What outcome? Was it based on the federal government’s decision to pause for six months? Was it based on some other criteria that the department had?

Mr. Fernandez: I think the discussion was with Canada at the time as we do jointly administer the Canada student loan program on behalf of the federal government. There was discussion across the country with sort of those teams that do deliver student aid programming to understand from a government policy perspective: what are the suite of options that could be available to learners, and what student aid measures were various governments taking? It was decided at the time that a six-month pause in repayment made sense at the very beginning of COVID as a part of a whole bunch of the

measures that the Alberta government took to support Albertans in response to COVID-19.

Mr. Schmidt: Before this decision was made, was there any, I guess, impact desired? You know, how would you know if this decision to pause student interest payments for six months was being successful, and were there any conditions under which the department might have considered extending it at that time, or when the decision was made, was it just for six months regardless of what the outcome was and what the circumstances were that would follow?

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you again. The policy decision to pause the student interest for those six months was done in sort of co-ordination and consultation with a number of our partners across the country, and that decision was made just a couple of weeks after the March 11 declaration of the pandemic.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you.

I’m going to turn it over to my friend Rakhi Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us today, and thank you to the ministry staff especially for being here. I want to ask a few questions about the enrolment of international students. It’s clear that this is a priority of the ministry. It’s set out on page 34 of the annual report to have an international strategy to “encourage efforts by Alberta universities and colleges to attract more qualified foreign students.” My question is around sort of the focus on international students, and I’m wondering if you could speak to why that’s a ministry priority, to attract international students.

I want to highlight that for me, myself, as I was going through the annual report, there was a consistent theme, which was that there are no performance measures within this annual report. There are some performance indicators but, of course, no performance measures. I’d like you to speak a little bit about why the priority on international students and what performance or what outcome and how you’re measuring that performance.

Ms Baldwin-Dery: Good morning, Member. Assistant Deputy Minister Carmen Baldwin-Dery, postsecondary policy and strategy. I’d just like to point out that the ministry is mindful of the need for performance metrics on all things in terms of accountability. The election having recently happened and this business plan, we basically – you’ll see quite a large shift in the business plan, this one from prior, and the reporting on this meant that we went with indicators rather than metrics. However, in the next series you will see a switch from some of the indicators to metrics, the difference being that metrics are considered to be more within the ministry’s direct control, so more ability to influence attaining those, whereas indicators are more of a long-term trend and considered to be less within the ministry’s direct influence. I think what I’m saying is that you will see a shift. This was the initial plan and reporting after a change in government, so there was quite a significant shift in terms of what were the outcomes and the objectives desired, but as we go further along, you will see incorporation of additional metrics.

Ms Pancholi: If I may, thank you for that. We’ll get back to the international students question, but as you mention, there are significant performance measures indicated in the 2018-19 business plan and annual report. It sounds like what I’m hearing is that the direction was simply to scrap those performance measures that existed, perhaps because of a change in government. Similarly, in this 2019-20 year significant changes were made and implemented.

Budget changes were made by this ministry affecting postsecondary institutions and students across Alberta, yet you're saying that there was no performance measure simply because of a change of government. Is that correct?

Ms Baldwin-Dery: Yeah. Hon. member, it was as well a short budget year. You know, what we are observing is a transition. I wouldn't say "scrapped" in terms of anything. I think there's a – in fact, I would say that the ministry is very dedicated when it comes to performance metrics. When we look to incorporating some of these, you will see that the metrics have to align with criteria and standards set out by Treasury Board and Finance, and there's a lot of attention paid to meeting those standards and criteria. We cannot just create new metrics and have them align sort of immediately with a change in outcomes or objectives. The metrics need to be reliable. They have to have the methodology that meets Treasury Board's standards. They have to be clearly understandable to the public. There are a certain number of criteria there, so I guess what I'm saying is that it does take a little bit of time sometimes when an outcome or an objective shifts for us to be able to put in a very solid performance metric that will demonstrate directly . . .

Ms Pancholi: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Our job is to hold ministries accountable for the expense of public dollars, and significant changes were made to the expense of public dollars. I appreciate that it's challenging, but I think that from an accountability perspective in the 2019 . . .

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. members, we'll now go to the next rotation for the government side, 10 minutes, with Member Neudorf to lead off.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will jump back to the apprenticeship questions and just finish up a few questions that I do have there. We were discussing the distribution of the scholarship program and how that money was provided. My final question just in that vein of questioning was: how has the ministry approached outreach to ensure that Albertans know about this scholarship program? If you could answer that question, please.

[Mr. Guthrie in the chair]

9:00

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you. Again, Mike Fernandez here, ADM with Advanced Education. The outreach began when my minister announced those program changes on September 9, 2019. We undertook a few activities to ensure that Albertans became aware of it. We updated Tradesecrets, which is one of the main websites where Albertans that are interested in apprenticeship and becoming a journey person would go. Also, on September 10, 2019, the day after the program was announced, we sent an e-mail with information to targeted stakeholders informing them of the program, making them aware of the requirements and the process by which they or their network could apply.

[Ms Phillips in the chair]

This included Alberta high schools, our partner Careers: the Next Generation, the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board members, and all apprenticeship scholarship donors. We held an in-person presentation that was made to all high school counsellors and to our partners, again, Careers: the Next Generation staff to support the above communication. Careers would then take that information and roll it out to the community with which they're very active. Careers has staff across the province geographically. They work closely with instructors in schools and community

leaders to advance the apprenticeship system, so they would've been sort of the face and voice in many communities.

During first-period orientation, that is given by department staff, we've included information so that if you're a new apprentice and you're taking your first-period orientation on any of our 47 designated trades at the time, you would've been exposed to information about how, where, when to apply and participate in that scholarship program.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you for that. Now, again, still following along into apprenticeship but a slightly different tack, does the ministry have data on how apprenticeship can be used to attract and retain a skilled workforce?

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you for the question. Yes, the department does have some data that was collected by the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board a couple of years ago. They conducted a labour market outcome survey, where they looked at, I think, about 10 years' worth of apprentices, and then they surveyed them and tracked them over the year from which they entered an apprenticeship through to employment. That information was published a couple of years back, and it's found on the Advanced Education website or on Alberta's open government portal.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you for that.

Mr. Fernandez: I don't have it in front . . .

Mr. Neudorf: No. I appreciate that. Thank you.

My next two questions are similar to that. I might put them both together to let you expound a little bit on that and for you to see where I'm going in my thinking. The two questions are these: how does industry develop these relationships with postsecondaries to further advance and expand the apprenticeship model in that thinking and using those dollars in addressing and increasing scholarships for apprenticeship? And is there a difference between degree and apprenticeship programs in relation to how far individuals relocate for work after graduating? Again, I'm trying to take those questions to find out the emphasis on increasing scholarships for apprenticeships, the direction of dollars to increase apprenticeship programs. Do we have the data that will help us see how that actually impacts our workforce and where they travel and locate and work from once they've graduated?

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you, Member. I'm really sorry, sir, but would you be able to repeat sort of the core question that you're asking us to help respond to this morning, please? I'm tracking what you're saying, sir, but I'm just missing the nuanced questions on which you're seeking some information.

Mr. Neudorf: Sure. No problem. How does industry develop a relationship with postsecondaries to further advance and expand the apprenticeship model – that was the first question – into other trades or into other avenues, as I know that's indicated?

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you. For that first question in terms of how does industry build relationships with some of these potential partners, the Alberta government has provided grant funding to a couple of our key partners, Careers: the Next Generation and Women Building Futures. Through both of those entities they conduct significant sort of outreach activities, marketing, and education campaigns to identify those industry members or those employers that have tradespeople already today or that are seeking to bring on new tradespeople into the future. They then, through

their network, will connect a potential employer back to a postsecondary institution or a high school, if we're targeting our high school youth, that would like to get into the RAP program and become an apprentice or a journeyperson.

Additionally, each of our designated trades across the province have program advisory committees and local advisory committees, that are made up of industry representatives. These are folks that have gone through the apprenticeship journey. They've become a journeyperson in their particular trade. And then they help sort of get information out and then tie things back to either Careers, a high school, or Women Building Futures.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you. I do appreciate that answer.

The second question was: is there a difference between a degree program and an apprenticeship program in relation to how far individuals would travel or relocate for work once they graduate? Is there any correlation on that, as we seek to have parity between skilled trades and degree programs? I'm just curious. If you take a degree program – this is my thinking – and graduate, you may travel further to find a job in your area of training. That's just an assumption. So I'm wondering if there's data on that, where a skilled trade would stay closer to where they went to school, did their apprenticeship. Just as we – again, we're trying to see value for dollars invested in that parity. That's my question relating to the parity part of that.

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you very much, sir. We're just canvassing the table here. We believe the department has access to that information, but we don't have that type of data at our fingertips this morning to respond to your question or to Public Accounts today.

Mr. Neudorf: Would the minister be willing to table that at some point in the future?

Mr. Fernandez: Absolutely. Yes.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you very much.

Thank you, officials, and thank you, Madam Chair. I will cede the rest of my time to MLA Lovely.

Ms Lovely: Well, good morning, ministry team. Thank you so much. It's nice to see you all even though it's virtually. My questions are on page 11 of the report. It's mentioned that the ministry "signed a new grant agreement with Careers: The Next Generation" and that "the Government of Alberta has committed to tripling the amount of annual funding to Careers: The Next Generation to more than \$6 million a year by 2022-23." Here's my question. How did the ministry determine the benefits of an agreement with Careers: the Next Generation, and how did it measure the success of the work done by Careers: the Next Generation?

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you very much for the question. Again, this is Mike Fernandez speaking, with Advanced Education. In 2017 we had a third party that conducted a survey among 578 of the former participants in the Careers internship program. That survey found that over 9 in 10, or about 93 per cent, would likely recommend the program. That survey also identified that between 72 and 83 per cent felt that their skills related to career self-efficacy – i.e., their ability to adapt to different situations and deal with problems – was well received and higher and that it had gone up. Then that survey conducted by our third party also identified that about 9 out of 10, 80 per cent or so, already have or likely have plans and paths to pursue postsecondary studies.

Additionally, in 2020 we undertook – it's not completed, but we commenced a data integration project that involves all of the client files of youth who participated in the Careers internship program and the department's apprenticeship information system to identify sort of their path to go from being a high school student that gets involved in RAP or gets supported by Careers and through to completion of some type of skilled trades career . . .

The Chair: Thank you to department officials.

We'll now move on to the next rotation of the Official Opposition. You have 10 minutes.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the ministry staff again. I'm going to go back around the issues of international students. First, let me begin with – I believe the deputy, when he was making his opening comments, remarked upon the fact that it was a 5.8 per cent increase in students enrolled in PSIs in the 2018-19 year, if I'm correct. Maybe it was the 2019-20. But I'm wondering if you can tell me how many students that actually means and how many of that increase in students are accounted for by international students?

9:10

Dr. Clarke: Thank you for that question, Member. We don't have that information at our fingertips, but we'd be glad to table that and bring that information back to you.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you. I appreciate that.

When I look at the annual report, I look at page 24, which talks about the total unique – it only has the data about 2018-19 because it is a performance indicator, not a measure. It talks about the roughly 5,000 new unique enrolments. Then if you compare that against page 37 of the annual report, which looks at the international students who have been registered, it looks to be that the majority of that, approximately 5,000 new enrolments, are actually international students.

My question and probably a concern that I hear a lot from my constituents is around the issue of brain drain and Alberta students who are choosing to not stay in Alberta for postsecondary, or even a brain drain of those who are already in the postsecondary system or, you know, very acclaimed researchers and faculty leaving Alberta for other jurisdictions. I'm wondering what performance measures do you have to track that, especially looking at the 2019-20 year, where the majority of that enrolment increase seemed to be from international students whereas we still have a growing population in Alberta of individuals who would be eligible for postsecondary institutions. Of course, anyone can do it. How is the department measuring the number of Alberta students or even Canadian students who are choosing Alberta postsecondary institutions?

Ms Baldwin-Dery: You are correct. I would say that the member is correct. Certainly, there was an increase of approximately 5,000. We do know that about 2,000 or just under of those were domestic and 3,000-plus were international. We are seeing that increase. I mean, that certainly does fluctuate. We do have the data available to identify not only which students are, of course, Albertans but also broader domestic for Canada as well as international.

Forgive me if I'm interpreting your question here; I think you're asking about access for Albertans. I would say that one of the things that is in place is consideration around system capacity as a total. You know, I think that when people express opinions about concern for access for Albertans, it may not be that they're suggesting that we don't need or benefit from international students. Rather, they just want to ensure access for Albertans. I think you are . . .

Ms Pancholi: Sorry. Thank you.

I'd say that my question is less about access and more about trying to encourage Alberta students and domestic students to choose Alberta postsecondary institutions. Access is certainly part of it in terms of affordability and making sure there are spaces, there are programs that meets their needs. What is the ministry doing and what have they done in 2019-20 to actively attract and retain Alberta students?

Mr. W. Singh: Thank you, Member. We had released in early 2020 our international education strategy, which highlighted our smart and sustainable growth for our international education, and that includes working with postsecondary institutions to remain strong and innovative and to have a balanced approach to international growth.

Ms Pancholi: Right. Thank you. I'm not sure that that answers my question about what the ministry's strategies are to attract and retain Alberta students. I understand that there is value in having international students in postsecondary. I also understand that it comes with a good increase of tuition. They pay substantial tuition, which postsecondary institutions require. But my question is – the focus in the 2019-20 annual report is around an international student strategy, and we see that that's where we've seen the largest increase in enrolments. What is the focus and where is the focus in the ministry, and how are they measuring it to attract and retain Alberta students?

Ms Baldwin-Dery: I think that there are a number of initiatives that I would say occur in the postsecondaries as well. I wouldn't say that the department alone is responsible for attraction and retention of domestic students or international, for that matter. I mean, the institutions do a great deal of marketing, of student outreach, of sending co-ordinators out into schools across the province, in fact travelling to other jurisdictions. So, certainly, there's a great deal of activity when it comes to trying to encourage our youth to attend postsecondary and make that choice, whether it's, you know, a short-term certificate or a degree program.

I think that there's, you know, a great deal of complexity in the factors around choice. Certainly, as we grow our data sets and our engagement with parents and the public, I would say that we're getting a better and better understanding of what the factors are that influence youth in their decision. One of the greatest of those is parents themselves having attended. I think that we're growing our ability to influence that, but again I would say that maybe another reason why you see this as an indicator and not as a metric is because it's not something that's entirely within the ministry's grasp to control, I guess.

I don't know if that helped.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you.

I'll just turn it over to my colleague Marie Renaud now.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you.

How much time do I have, Madam Chair?

The Chair: Three minutes.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Excellent. Thank you.

Despite the importance of training the next generation of Albertans, the ministry annual report doesn't mention people with disabilities in fact at all. The only time that the word "disability" appears is in the financial statements as a footnote, when it mentions disability insurance alongside medical and dental benefits as noncash items, which is on page 63, for your reference. Clearly, that

is disappointing. What we do know is that there are tens of thousands of students coming up through K to 12 that have disabilities. We know that there's a significant percentage of the population that has disabilities. We also know that people with disabilities are unemployed at twice the rate as nondisabled peers. So it's a little disappointing not even to see mention of Albertans with disabilities.

In any event, according to public information on the website, actually, "every publicly funded post-secondary institution in Alberta has a Disability Services Office." I didn't see any mention of that, any metrics whatsoever, in the 2019-20 annual report. I'm wondering if ministry officials could confirm that this is indeed correct, that every publicly funded postsecondary institution in Alberta has a disability services office.

Dr. Clarke: Thank you, Member, for the question. We don't have that information at the tips of our fingers. We'd be more than happy to table that and bring that back and be able to address that in our conversations with the institutions themselves. In many cases those services would be embedded within the broader student services programs or entities within the institutions as well, but we will get that information for you.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you for agreeing to get that information for the committee. Just for your information, the website of Advanced Education is very specific, saying that there are specific disability services offices.

My next question is: where is this spending coming from? Is this coming out of Campus Alberta innovation, or is this coming out of foundational learning supports? I'm referring to the lines on page 73.

Mr. B. Smith: Good morning, Member. The funding for the disabilities grant to the postsecondary institutions comes out of element 2.2.

Ms Renaud: Okay. So, then, could you . . .

The Chair: Thank you, hon. members.

We'll now move on to the government side for 10 minutes. Member Lovely, please.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Madam Chair. ADM Fernandez, we were talking about Careers: the Next Generation before the time ran out. Specifically, you were addressing the benefits and the measurements of success of Careers: the Next Generation. I wondered if there was any more that you had to add.

9:20

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you. Yeah, there are a couple more points I would make. I was just flagging during our last discussion that we've done some more tracking of those students who had participated in a Careers internship through to employment, just to see the trajectory and the outcomes, you know, the benefits of Alberta investing in an organization like Careers. A couple of the things that we learned is that five years after high school a large majority of those students that we tracked, over 80 per cent, did continue to progress in their apprenticeship programming.

We also learned that graduates of the Careers RAP program were likely to complete their apprenticeship at a much younger age versus those who did not get into any internships in high school. We observed that those who entered the trades that did not go through Careers got in there at about age 31, versus those who were exposed to Careers internship opportunities, they entered the trades at 22 years of age. There were some performance indicators in that report.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, ADM Fernandez. I've had an opportunity to start meeting some of these students in my community who are involved in the RAP program, and they're very grateful for the experience. I'm glad that we have this available for them.

My next question. As mentioned in the annual report, Careers: The Next Generation seeks to "double the number of schools where it provides programs" such as apprenticeship learning and internships. How has the ministry approached this partnership to ensure that it is providing the foundation with the tools it needs to successfully roll out its outreach?

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you for the question. The department did provide additional assistance to Careers to implement an employer incentive program in light of the challenges of the pandemic and the decrease in world oil prices. Our department and our team, my team in particular, collaborates quite closely with Careers to identify possible postsecondary programming where youth would benefit in some type of internship opportunity. We also work very closely with our colleagues over at the Ministry of Education to have them continue to encourage school boards to collaborate with Careers to ensure that all high school students across the province are aware of and have access to those internship opportunities.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, ADM Fernandez. What's the government's role in the implementation of this program?

Mr. Fernandez: With a focus on implementation our role is really one of facilitation. We do have a good working relationship with Careers, we do have a good working relationship with the Minister of Education, but in that relationship it's really Careers that will work directly with employers and youth at the grassroots level in communities across the province, in partnership with schools and some of the high school co-ordinators that exist, to help advocate and advance apprenticeship for young Albertans.

Ms Lovely: I do want to mention that my community has really embraced this program and the Chambers of Commerce recently did a blast for it not only in Camrose but throughout the entire constituency, so I'm very excited about the opportunities that we're collaboratively creating for youth in our community to make sure that they've got opportunities not only to get experience but for future jobs. I think it's just tremendous that we're doing that.

I just want to change gears ever so slightly and now address the community adult learning program, CALP for short, which is mentioned on page 12. It supports over 100 community-based learning organizations who provide adult literacy and foundational learning opportunities in every region of the province. This leads me to my question. How much funding did the program receive in 2019-2020, and how did the department determine the necessary amount for the program to be effectively supported?

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you, Member, for the question. In 2019-20 Advanced Education invested \$18.1 million in CALP, or the community adult learning program. This amount is largely historical in nature in that that \$18.1 million has been quite static for the majority of the program's 45 years of existence, with only a few small increases in program dollars over that time frame.

Through the community adult learning program Advanced Education supports a community-based model that involves leveraging significant in-kind contributions and volunteer hours for effective program delivery in each community. To help us maximize the effectiveness of that investment, approximately \$2 million of the \$18.1 million is invested in a professional development system to build capacity of CALP staff. The community adult learning program professional development

system helps protect the government of Alberta's investments in community adult learning programs by ensuring that their organization's staff, many of whom do not have formal training as adult educators, are equipped to work with low-literacy and foundational learners using best practices in their field.

Thank you.

Ms Lovely: Thank you for the answer, ADM Fernandez. What oversight does the ministry have to ensure this funding is being used as efficiently as possible?

Mr. Fernandez: To help ensure that we're spending those dollars well, the department did work to build a logic model that helps us measure immediate, intermediate, and the long-term impacts and outcomes of that funding, both of the direct delivery of community adult learning programming as well as the professional development of that system. Through annual reporting, grant recipients are required to report on a series of outputs, you know, demographics, program financial details, et cetera, and the outcomes under the CALP evaluation framework.

In between reporting cycles our grant managers will regularly correspond with CALP-funded organizations about program delivery, operations, professional development, et cetera, just to ensure that ongoing oversight and accountability of that CALP grant does exist. Three of the organizations that we fund through the community adult learning program are granting councils. We have one located in Calgary, one in Edmonton, and one in Red Deer, and those councils will actually award CALP grants to local agencies on behalf of the government of Alberta through an annual competitive process. In addition to grant management oversight over the granting councils, Advanced Education also surveys grant council recipients in each of the three cities, just to further assess the performance of those councils.

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you so much for the fulsome answer, ADM Fernandez.

Madam Chair, how much time do I have left? One minute?

The Chair: Two-ish.

Ms Lovely: Two minutes? Okay. My last question is: how did the department determine the amount of funding needed for First Nations colleges?

Mr. Fernandez: The ministry does a review of annual reports and then conducts follow-up as needed for First Nation funding. The budget for the First Nations college grant has been the same since 2014. The total amount of the FNC grant is determined by rolling project grants into one grant amount, and then the total is divided by five to determine how much each of those First Nation colleges will receive from the CALP funding.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, ADM Fernandez.

I think that my time is almost running out, so I will pass it on to the next member, and I believe that's Mr. Rowsell, but I'm not certain.

The Chair: Mr. Turton, actually. You might as well read your question into the record; at least that part's done then. You have about a minute and 15 seconds, Mr. Turton.

Mr. Turton: Excellent. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you, everyone, for coming out here today to answer some of these questions. My question really revolves around Alberta 2030 and transforming postsecondary education. Here in Spruce Grove I have a NAIT campus, so obviously this is of vital importance to the

residents here in my riding. My question is in reference to key outcome 2.2, found on page 21 of the annual report. Advanced Ed announced in February 2020 that they will be doing a comprehensive review of Alberta's postsecondary system, and in March 2020 the department posted a request for proposals, seeking an experienced vendor to conduct the system review. My first question is: how did the ministry identify and determine the goals it aims to achieve in the review?

Ms Baldwin-Dery: Thank you, Member, for the question. In terms of determining the goals for the review, we actually had a lot to draw on. I would say that, first of all, we had the OAG reports. Certainly, the OAG reports had indicated to us, to the ministry, for quite some time that system strategic vision . . .

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move on to the fourth and final rotation for the Official Opposition. You have 10 minutes, starting off with Member Renaud.

9:30

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you. I'm just going to go back to the questions that I was asking before I was cut off. On page 73 if I could just draw your attention to lines 2.4 and 5.2, and it looks like, with both of those items, that there was a significant amount unexpended. Now, when I look at the notes to financial statements, it describes sort of the activities that go on in these lines, and both of these lines mention Albertans with disabilities. I am wondering if you don't have a list of what those activities are, if you would agree to table that for the committee.

Mr. B. Smith: Thank you, Member. Brad Smith, assistant deputy minister of financial services. Yes, we can provide you some information on what is included in 2.4. With respect to 5.2, foundational learning program, the effect of the pandemic is part of the reason for the lapse there.

Ms Renaud: Okay. You're saying that \$3.8 million was unexpended because of the pandemic, and that wasn't like an exercise in savings?

Mr. B. Smith: There was less volume in those learners because of accessing services because of the pandemic. Yes.

Ms Renaud: Okay. I'm also wondering, just backing up to my question – and I know the ministry did agree to table information or confirmation that all PSIs had disability service offices – I'm wondering if it would be possible to also get some data around the number of disabled students in each of those PSIs, and what is the total investment for that particular institution as there's no information in the annual report where we can get any of that insight? There are no metrics or anything. I'm wondering if the officials would agree to table that information.

Dr. Clarke: Yes, Member, we can certainly do that. We don't have that information at our fingertips but certainly can get that for you. We will table that.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you very much.

I want to move on a little bit to apprenticeships, and I'm going to draw your attention to page 10. Key objective 1.1 talks about improving effectiveness of apprenticeship programs, strengthening the model, expanding opportunities, all of that. I'd like to remind the officials – and I don't know how many were here for the last time that Advanced Education appeared before this committee – that I did ask if there were any metrics at all to measure, monitor,

or even identify apprenticeship positions for people with disabilities, or how many Albertans with disabilities were involved in any apprenticeship program in Alberta? At that time officials said that there was nothing. There were no benchmarks; there were no metrics. I'm wondering if that is still the same situation, or has that changed?

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you for the question. Mike Fernandez, ADM with Advanced Education. The situation today is the same as last year, when you did ask this question at Public Accounts. From our apprenticeship perspective, the demographic data that we publish is in our apprenticeship and industry training statistical profile, which is posted annually on the Advanced Education website, but that document does not track nor report on any apprentices with disabilities. As per last year, you know, the department does work to have accommodations in place where needed to support apprentices, in particular from an examination perspective. For example, when needed or requested, we can provide readers to assist learners with taking the exam, or we can provide extra time if needed to help take an exam, but we do not track or report any of the data that you're requesting.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Well, thank you for that.

Now, I do understand that we're required to make accommodation for things like examination, but we're also required to make accommodations for things like entrance into a program or a seat at the table or an apprenticeship spot or a spot in a postsecondary institution. I would suggest that we have a lot broader responsibility than just examinations.

What I would like to say again – I had mentioned this earlier – is that we've got literally tens of thousands of Albertans coming up through K to 12, so there is a lot of emphasis in this annual report talking about investment in high school age Albertans and looking at that path to apprenticeship. I don't see, again, any mention of students with disabilities at all. If there is something that I'm missing, that I missed, if there is some sort of target or metric or investment related to disabled Albertans in apprenticeship streams, I would welcome any information about that.

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you very much. I think, in part, Member, the information you'd be seeking would actually come from the postsecondary institutions. Today we have 11 PSIs that participate in delivering the technical training for an apprentice. That's the classroom component. A lot of the questions and the information that you're after would reside with the PSIs on their particular websites. Whatever information they're reporting on would speak to it. There are some supports that our department does provide from a student aid perspective. I just wanted to share that with you because I think . . .

Ms Renaud: I'm sorry. I understand there's likely some information about student aid, but I don't have a lot of time. I'm going to move on a little bit, because the other question I wanted to ask as it relates to apprenticeships is: can you tell me if there is any work under way? I didn't really see any discussion or description of it in the annual report about, other than Women Building Futures, what the ministry is doing to increase the number of women that are at the apprenticeship table and that are taking advantage of these opportunities.

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you, Member. I think, as you just flagged, our partnership and the grant agreement with Women Building Futures are targeted at encouraging women to get into trades to become an apprentice and then become a journey person. As we all know, they're underrepresented. The partnership with WBF is the

main tactic. However, we do work with Careers, and we do work directly with high schools. We are regularly talking about underrepresented groups in the apprenticeship system, so I would say that, you know, part of that accountability is on my team, just to keep asking, probing, and pushing to advance and ensure fair representation for all Albertans in the apprenticeship system.

Ms Renaud: Sure. So how many women would you say come through Women Building Futures every year, let's say, and how many stay in those positions? I mean, I didn't see it through this survey or any kind of survey. How many women stay in, the measures that your ministry undertakes two years after completion of the program? Like, what are the numbers we're talking about? I keep asking about – you know, we ask about women, but we always get Women Building Futures, which is a program. But we're looking at a larger picture of there are a lot more women in Alberta, so my question is: other than Women Building Futures, because I'm assuming that number is not sufficient, what else is the ministry doing to encourage women, to support women, to track their success and their progress? I really didn't see much in the annual report.

Mr. Fernandez: Thank you for the question, Member. I think there are a couple of outputs that might speak to some of the information you're seeking that would not be in the annual report that we're talking about today. I think the first resource I would steer us all to – and you won't have this in front of you – is the statistical profile for 2020 for the apprenticeship and industry training programs that we run. Last February we would have posted online all of the demographic data, all of the sort of snapshots by geography, by demographics, by programming, et cetera. I can't go through it in real time to see, you know, what in particular might be of interest to you, but I think we could table this report as a part of our response back to the committee, just to put it at your fingertips, if you like.

Ms Renaud: That would be great.

My last question. I see in the open data there is information about international students and indigenous students, but there isn't a mention of disabled students at all. I'm sort of going back to my original question. I'm wondering if the ministry can explain why that is. Is there another way, perhaps, that the ministry is tracking participation in postsecondary of disabled Albertans?

Mr. W. Singh: Thank you for the question, Member. It's Warren Singh, representing Peter LeClaire, ADM. We do track the number of students that come through who self-identify as disabled, so we do have numbers currently. We don't have . . .

9:40

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move over to the government side for the final 10-minute block. I'll move things over to Member Turton, who is joining us by videoconference.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess, just to go back to my earlier question, specifically on key outcome 2.2 on page 21, my first question was: how did the ministry identify and determine the goals that it aims to achieve in this review? I believe that you started answering that question.

Ms Baldwin-Dery: Yes. Thank you, Member, for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to respond. Carmen Baldwin-Dery, ADM, postsecondary policy and strategy. As I was saying, there were a number of things over time that have really indicated, I think, for Advanced Education that this kind of work was needed,

certainly the Auditor General reports. I appreciate, you know, obviously, the pointing and the guidance that they've given in terms of systems, strategic direction needed, vision needed.

I would also indicate the MacKinnon panel report. Certainly, you will all be familiar with that. It, too, had a number of specific recommendations – and I won't get the wording on them all right – particularly recommendations 7, 8, 9, and 20, which were aimed for the ministries of Advanced Ed and JEL in terms of JEL's relationship to the postsecondary system on the research and innovation side. That was another indicator.

And I would say that a third piece was that, as a regular course of business, one of the things that we do is what we call strategic foresight, which are some of the methodologies about scanning the horizon in terms of global trends and trends closer to home in the higher education sector, in the adult learning sector. There were a certain number of trends, obviously, that were on our radar in terms of distance learning, access questions, affordability issues, et cetera.

I would say that between a combination of the Auditor General's reports, the MacKinnon panel findings, our own scanning of trends and pieces – and then, you know, to go very specific on those, if I look at something like cost structures that the MacKinnon panel were pointed to, they looked at Alberta compared with other Canadian jurisdictions and said: "Your cost structures are high in this province. Is there something that we can do to better deliver, to provide access, affordable access, and quality programs with fewer resources?" Right? All of those pieces informed the review, and we created an RFP. Many, many, I would say, eyes and minds participated in crafting that RFP. What we were really seeking to do was to get support from global expertise. We want a made-in-Alberta solution, we want it to be tailored to our needs, but we also wanted to look at best practice and comparators across the globe in higher education.

Mr. Turton: Excellent. Thank you very much for that.

I guess those were actually some of my follow-up questions regarding that RFP specifically. You touched base a little bit on it, but I guess my first question is: like, what were some of the requirements that were put in place for the experienced vendor to meet and some of those benchmarks that you had in there? Also, I guess a supplementary question to that is: how were the parameters of the review determined, and how did the ministry decide to implement them?

Ms Baldwin-Dery: Thank you, Member. In terms of the RFP, we conducted a competitive procurement process. We were looking, as I say, for a vendor with a necessary global expertise to support, really, not a tweak-around-the-margins approach but a transformative approach. We have not done a comprehensive system review of adult learning in this province, really, since A Learning Alberta, which was – some of you may remember – 2004, 2005-ish. The minister's vision for this was to have a comprehensive engagement process with all stakeholders across the system and to really look at addressing those goals. So when the annual report refers to that, that is what was envisioned.

Obviously, there were a number of criteria put in the procurement process. We were looking for a vendor who had expertise in different areas, whether it was teaching, the research and innovation piece, their ability to work with transformation in higher education systems, and I do emphasize the word "systems." We weren't looking for a vendor who had worked with a single institution. We were looking for a systemic approach to addressing challenges and opportunities. We were also looking for a vendor who would really bring the power of data and evidence and analytics to bear on the considerations for this review.

Mr. Turton: Excellent. Thank you so much for that answer.

At this point I'd like to turn over the rest of my time to Member Garth Rowswell. Thank you.

Mr. Rowswell: My talk has to do relative to the dual credit program. You mention on page 11 of your annual report that the dual credit programming continues to help grade 10s, 11s, and 12s. I know that's the case because it's pretty popular out here at Lakeland College. They earn high school and postsecondary credits that can count towards postsecondary certification, diplomas, or degrees, including apprenticeship programs. Now, with Alberta Education being the provincial lead for dual credit, can the ministry explain to the committee what support is provided by Advanced Education?

Mr. W. Singh: Well, thank you, Member. It's Warren Singh representing Peter Leclair, ADM. Thank you for the question. Advanced Education supports Alberta's recognition of the value of experiential and hands-on learning in helping young Albertans develop their skills and build rewarding careers. This includes investment in skills development, in work-integrated learning opportunities for youth in the province. Some examples of this would be dual credit programming, of course; increasing the Careers: the Next Generation supports; investing in Skills Canada, Alberta; and supporting high school students through career technology studies, pathways to apprenticeship, and the RAP program as well.

Support is also provided to Education in the facilitation of shared K to 12 and postsecondary policy and processes for dual credit, including the dual credit framework, dual credit implementation guide as a few examples. We also collaborate with Education to support questions and issues shared by and information for stakeholders and their dual credit partnerships, including new data sharing between the two ministries and beginning to analyze dual credit student success and transitions into postsecondary and apprenticeship education.

Advanced Education is the registrar of the postsecondary apprenticeship program, and advanced standing in apprenticeship programs can be awarded for the completion of high school programs. We also facilitate next steps for recommendations from the Skills for Jobs Task Force report. Upon the completion of that in '19-20 we started to look at ways to expand and strengthen apprenticeship education and work-integrated learning as well. Finally, we're looking at facilitating next steps for upcoming recommendations from the Alberta 2030: building skills for jobs review as well.

Mr. Rowswell: How do you promote that within the high schools? What role do you play in the promotion of this to try to get more participation?

Mr. W. Singh: Thank you, Member. Through its program recognition Advanced Education facilitates all delivery and partnership models. We also provide information to and connections among stakeholders to support their dual credit partnerships and programming, including support for partnership, sharing of best practices, problem solving, and support for new partnerships via the Dual Credit Articulation Committee. Advanced Education also supports Education's work with stakeholders regarding dual credit implementation.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. What is Advanced Education's role in the development and implementation of delivery in the partnership models in regard to dual credit programming? How do you set it up, or what's your role in that part?

Mr. W. Singh: Thank you again for the question, Member. Through the ACAT Secretariat and other resources in the department Advanced Education directly facilitates the governance and operations of all system-led articulation committees, including the provincial Dual Credit Articulation Committee. This committee is led by K to 12 and institution co-chairs and has over a hundred stakeholder members, including representation from numerous school authorities and institutions as well as from ministries and other organizations such as Labour and Immigration and Careers: the Next Generation as well. The committee promotes relationship building and collaboration among dual credit pathways representatives and sharing pathways, updates, and opportunities, system issues and recommendations, and possible solutions to shared pathway challenges.

9:50

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. Thank you. I noticed that the school divisions used to get a line item relative specifically to dual credit and they had to spend the money on that, and that's been taken away. They just . . .

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Members, now we are into our three-minute round, whereby members have the opportunity to read questions into the record for written follow-up by officials. We will begin with the Official Opposition. There are three minutes available to read follow-up questions. Please take it away, hon. members from the Official Opposition.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll try to be quick here. To the ministry officials, I'm wondering if we can follow up on the question that Marie Renaud, the Member for St. Albert, just asked at the end. We were about to get an answer on the number of disabled students. If you could table that information, that would be appreciated.

Can the ministry staff also follow up with this committee in writing with an itemized list of the in-year cuts and their amounts totalling the \$18 million to \$19 million, which was indicated was the total savings required, and confirm in writing that the veteran's scholarship was not awarded in 2019-20 due to in-year savings?

With respect to the Alberta 2030 review – this is the review that is indicated in the annual report which was done by McKinsey as an organization – I think many people have heard the commentary in the press to indicate that perhaps there is no value for money coming out of that report. Essentially, it just indicated what the ministry was already doing, which was cuts to supports and increasing tuition. That review cost taxpayers roughly \$3.7 million. Can the ministry table a value-for-money analysis on this contract with McKinsey? For context, that \$3.7 million on the McKinsey report is more than the \$2.9 million that was allocated by the ministry for Women Building Futures in 2019-2020.

Next, the ministry laid off many Albertans as a result of the cuts from the ministry in the postsecondary education sector, yet we see on page 45 of the annual report that \$400 million was issued in severance costs as a result of these layoffs in 2019-20. Can the ministry share what analysis they did on the value for money of these severance costs versus keeping Albertans employed and using that teaching capacity to bring in more international and domestic students?

Lastly, I will request that – there were a lot of cuts made in 2019-20, of course, to postsecondary institutions, but these cuts were not evenly distributed. In fact, the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge carried the bulk of those cuts. Can the ministry staff please table an indication whether

or not those decisions as to which institutions would be cut was a ministerial decision, a Treasury Board decision, or a cabinet decision? While we do get a lot of excellent training from our polytechnics and regional colleges, the majority of innovation, in higher tech especially, comes from these universities. How do you reconcile the cuts at these major institutions with, apparently, the government's new focus on innovation and tech?

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.
We have a couple more.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. If the ministry could table a complete breakdown of the changes that they made to the scholarships and awards and grants in the 2019-2020 year as well as how much was awarded from each scholarship and award. Can you also provide the criteria for each of those scholarships and awards? Also, provide a detailed expenditure of the heritage trust fund scholarship that was awarded.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'll now move over to the government side.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the Auditor General's report under ministry desired outcomes, their third ministry desired outcome on "post-secondary institutions have the flexibility and freedom to innovate and compete," my questions are these: what are the flexibilities available to postsecondary institutions? Could there be further changes that allow even more flexibilities for postsecondary institutions to more effectively manage their programs and overall funding so as to increase both service and cost efficiencies? Those are my questions.

I will pass that on to Ms Lovely.

Ms Lovely: Okay. My question is regarding Women Building Futures, page 11 of the annual report. The organization's mission to empower women by removing barriers and providing training in construction, trades, transportation industries, maintenance, and more is important for the prosperity of our present and future. Can the ministry describe how it determines the amount of funding needed for this program this year, what is the role of the ministry as determined by this agreement, and what sort of performance metrics are put in place by the ministry to determine whether Women Building Futures is meeting its targets?

Changing gears, in Budget 2019, as mentioned on page 20 of the annual report 2019-2020, "Advanced Education began to shift the investment framework for Alberta's post-secondary system to

ensure long-term sustainability." What are the savings seen from shifting to a sustainable investment framework?

Mr. Rowswell: As mentioned in the annual report of the ministry on page 35, "approximately \$650,000 [was invested] in international education programs such as the . . . Mitacs Globalink Program." How did the ministry measure the needs of each program to determine the distribution of the \$650,000 of funding? What performance metrics were put in place to ensure that the Mitacs Globalink program is effective, and what is the department's overall role in supporting this program?

You mentioned that as part of the development of a new international education strategy Advanced Education was currently doing a review of all international grant programs in the province. How has the department determined the parameters of this review, and how have they ensured that the review will meet required targets and be done efficiently?

Just an addition onto scholarships and awards, on page 21 of the annual report you mentioned that the total funding provided for the now consolidated scholarship transformation project "remained the same" but that this consolidation was "to simplify and align eligibility criteria, deadlines, requirements and the application process."

The Chair: Thank you very much, Member Rowswell.

I'd like to thank officials from the Ministry of Advanced Education for attending today and responding to the members' questions. We ask that outstanding questions be responded to in writing within 30 days and forwarded to the committee clerk.

I'll now move on to other business. Hon. members, are there any other items for discussion under other business?

Seeing none, now we'll move on to the date of the next meeting, which has been set at April 20, when the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Innovation will be visiting with us.

Those at the table are reminded to please remove their own bottles and cups for the safety of LAO staff.

I will now call for a motion to adjourn. Would a member move that the meeting be adjourned?

Mr. Guthrie: I move that the Committee on Public Accounts adjourn until the next scheduled meeting, set for April 20.

The Chair: Very good. All in favour? Are there any opposed? The motion is now carried. Thank you, hon. members. The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 9:58 a.m.]

