



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fifth Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Advanced Education

Tuesday, March 19, 2019
8:30 a.m.

Transcript No. 29-5-1

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Fifth Session**

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Peter Leclaire, Assistant Deputy Minister, Advanced Learning and Community Partnerships

Dan Rizzoli, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Corporate Services

David Schneider, Executive Director, Foundational Learning

Rod Skura, Deputy Minister

Andy Weiler, Assistant Deputy Minister, Apprenticeship and Student Aid

8:30 a.m.

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

[Mr. Cyr in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning. I'd like to call this meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Scott Cyr. I am the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, and I am chair of this committee. I'd like to ask the members, staff, and guests at the table to introduce themselves for the record, starting on my right, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Mr. Dach: Good morning, everyone. Lorne Dach, MLA for Edmonton-McClung, Deputy Chair.

Mr. Hunter: Good morning, Mr. Chair. Grant Hunter, MLA for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Panda: Good morning. Prasad Panda, MLA, Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Gotfried: Good morning. Richard Gotfried, MLA, Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Barnes: Drew Barnes, Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Clark: Morning, everyone. Greg Clark, MLA, Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Rizzoli: Good morning. Dan Rizzoli, ADM, strategic and corporate services, Advanced Ed.

Mr. Isaak: Richard Isaak, senior financial officer, Advanced Ed.

Mr. Skura: Rod Skura, Deputy Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Leclaire: Peter Leclaire, ADM, advanced learning and community partnerships, Advanced Education.

Mr. Weiler: Good morning. Andy Weiler, ADM, apprenticeship and student aid, Advanced Education.

Ms Wong: Good morning. Teresa Wong, audit principal, Auditor General's office.

Mr. Driesen: Rob Driesen, Assistant Auditor General.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, MLA for St. Albert.

Ms Littlewood: Good morning. Jessica Littlewood, representing the beautiful rural constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Dr. Turner: Bob Turner, Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Kazim: Good morning. Anam Kazim, MLA for Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Good morning. Jamie Kleinsteuber, MLA, Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Carson: Good morning. Jon Carson, MLA for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Nielsen: Good morning, everyone. Chris Nielsen, MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

Dr. Massolin: Good morning. Philip Massolin, manager of research and committee services.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

The Chair: We have one member on teleconferencing. Ms Miller, could you announce yourself for the record?

Ms Miller: Barb Miller, MLA, Red Deer-South.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Miller.

We will move on to substitutions. Mr. Kleinsteuber is substituting for Ms Payne.

I have a few housekeeping items to address. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting. Committee proceedings are all live streamed on the Internet and broadcasted on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio and video stream transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website.

Moving on to approval of the agenda, are there any changes or additions to the agenda? Seeing none, would a member like to move that the agenda for the March 19, 2019, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed? Dr. Turner. All those in favour? Any opposed? That motion is carried. Thank you very much.

Approval of the minutes. Do members have any amendments to the December 4, 2018, minutes? Seeing none. If a member would like to move that the minutes of the December 4, 2018, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed. Mr. Panda. Any discussion on the motion? All in favour? Any opposed? That motion is carried. Thank you very much.

I'd like to welcome our guests who are here on behalf of the Ministry of Advanced Education to address the outstanding recommendations from the office of the Auditor General as well as the ministry's 2017-2018 annual report. Members should have the research report prepared by research services, the Auditor General's briefing document as well as the status of the Auditor General's recommendations document completed and submitted by the minister.

The committee welcomes opening remarks not exceeding 10 minutes. Mr. Skura, will you be taking the lead in this respect?

Mr. Skura: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Please go ahead.

Mr. Skura: Okay. Good morning, members of the committee. I am very pleased to have this opportunity to talk about the work of Advanced Education. We've already introduced the members at the table, so I won't go through that again for you. I'd like to start off by thanking the office of the Auditor General. Your work helps ensure that Alberta's postsecondary system is efficient, accountable, and transparent. That's why my department takes the Auditor General's recommendations seriously and why we have been working hard to address them. These recommendations help us improve how we empower students through quality education. Access to quality, affordable education equips students to contribute to a skilled workforce, which in turn empowers our province.

Our department provides operational and capital funding for 26 postsecondary institutions in Alberta. For 2017-18 the consolidated ministry expense is more than \$6 billion. This includes funding for 21 public postsecondary institutions, limited funding for five independent academic institutions, and financial supports for students. In 2018-19 this included scholarships and awards for more than 50,000 students and student loans to nearly 85,000 learners. Yearly about 265,000 students participate in higher education in the province. That is why it's so important to have a system that can

grow and adapt to the needs of students. This includes giving students more say on decisions that affect them by adding more undergraduate student representation on the board of governors at 14 institutions.

This change was part of the roles and mandate review that my department undertook over the past year. Included in that work was the successful modernization of the postsecondary sectors to provide more clarity on mandates and accurately reflect the work institutions are doing. These updated sectors are as follows: the comprehensive academic and research university, undergraduate university, comprehensive community college, polytechnic institutions, specialized arts and cultural institutions, and independent academic institutions.

Our work on the roles and mandates will also help us meet some of the six recommendations from the Auditor General. Our department has developed a vision and set out principles that guided the last recent changes to the Post-secondary Learning Act. The core themes are directing our progress on a strategic plan that will define our minister's expectations for postsecondary institutions.

As you know, the government undertook a review of agencies, boards, and commissions. Phase 3 of this ABC review focused on public postsecondary institutions and informs our work on our strategic plan. This was a recommendation from the Auditor General, and we expect the plan to be complete by 2020-2021.

We are also taking steps to improve the knowledge and accountability of our institutions' board of governors by providing training sessions and further implementing the Conflicts of Interest Act. In addition, the Auditor General also recommended that we improve oversight processes and risk management related to for-profit and cost-recovery ventures. Our department has developed guidelines and expectations regarding these ventures at institutions.

I am happy to say that Advanced Education is making progress to address the need for enterprise risk management. We have developed a new framework to identify key strategic risks and are currently working on specific actions to manage them.

Finally, to round out the recommendations for Advanced Education, the department has reviewed and implemented a new process for travel, meal, and hospitality expenses.

Moving on to the recommendations made regarding specific institutions, our department continues to work with individual institutions to improve processes and controls. A key recommendation we are working on is addressing the recommendation regarding MacEwan University's financial processes and controls. Postsecondary institutions must be able to implement and maintain effective processes and internal controls. Without these controls institutions leave themselves open to fraud and error. That is why the department has been working with members from institutions through an internal financial controls working group. Through this group we have completed an assessment of current financial controls and are developing processes for sharing information on incidents, breaches, monitoring, and reporting.

In addition to this work, we are also working directly with institutions to help them make progress on specific recommendations. For example, Athabasca University has improved its ability to resume operations following system outages and created better procedures to monitor and report access and security violations.

Olds College has completed improvements to controls related to who can access its information systems, and Northern Lakes College is setting up procedures to ensure former employees no longer have system access.

As well, I am happy to report that the recommendations for Keyano College that have been outstanding for several years are

very close to completion. Now the department continues to provide nonfinancial resources to assist Keyano College to address deficiencies in reporting, better understand the college's financial situation, and improve financial and operational controls. I am happy to share that we expect these recommendations to be fully completed later this year.

8:40

The department is also working with Alberta University of the Arts to improve their financial reporting, and the University of Calgary's administration is working to improve the effectiveness of its internal control program.

Taken together, these improvements will go a long way to make our institutions more accountable. Public trust is vital for our postsecondary system. Albertans deserve to feel confident that their tax dollars are invested well, and we have a responsibility to provide students with access to an affordable, high-quality education that prepares them for career success. That is why we value the committee's time and questions today.

Thank you. I am pleased to take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

I will now call on Mr. Driesen, Assistant Auditor General, for his comments. You have five minutes, sir.

Mr. Driesen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll provide some very brief opening comments as the deputy minister has done a good job of summarizing a number of our outstanding recommendations. I will highlight for the committee that the outstanding recommendation to the department related to travel, meals, and hospitality expenses, which the department has indicated is ready for follow-up: we plan on doing some follow-up work on that this spring and plan on reporting on that, hopefully, later this year.

With respect to the remaining five recommendations the department continues to follow up on or implement our recommendations, and we will follow up on those when the department indicates that they are ready to be audited.

With respect to the postsecondary institutions two of the outstanding recommendations have been indicated to us are ready for follow-up, and we plan to do that follow-up work as well a little later on this year.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

The committee will follow its current time allotment for questions. The first and second rotation will provide nine minutes each for members of the Official Opposition and government members, followed by four and a half minutes for the third-party member. The third rotation provides five minutes each for the members of the Official Opposition and the government members. Time permitting, following these rotations, we will hear from the independent, the Freedom Conservative Party, the Liberal, and the Progressive Conservative members in attendance wishing to participate. If none are in attendance, this time will be equally rotated between the Official Opposition, government members, and third-party member, with the final few minutes designated for any outstanding questions to be read into the record and to consider other items of business.

We ask that officials at the table as well as those seated in the gallery provide their names before responding to questions. This is for the benefit of those listening online and for the *Hansard* recording.

I will now open the floor to questions from the members. Mr. Barnes.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks to all of you for being here today and your work for Albertans. I'd like to start with one of the outstanding recommendations. One of the outstanding recommendations from the Auditor General was to "improve department's oversight of institution's risk assessment of ventures" at postsecondary. This was on page 4 of the summary of recommendations in the 2018 Auditor General's report. My first question is: when does your department expect to have this recommendation fully implemented?

Mr. Skura: That's the recommendation on for-profit ventures that you're referring to?

Mr. Barnes: Yes.

Mr. Skura: Yeah. The work has been completed on developing a policy for that work that will guide postsecondary institutions in making assessments of for-profit ventures. That document, that policy, has been approved by government and has been circulated to the postsecondary institutions very recently. Our expectation would be that – it's in place now. The short answer to your question is that the work has been completed, and it's in place. We would expect that after we go through about a year's cycle of doing that, then there would be enough data for the Auditor General to complete a review of that.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you for that.

Why has it taken over three years to get this far to implement this recommendation?

Mr. Skura: There have been a number of things the department is working on. I think, as I mentioned at – it was either 2015 or 2016 – the meeting of Public Accounts when I came here, we did an enormous amount of work on the agencies, boards, and commissions review. The postsecondary piece was the third phase of that. A big chunk of that was around reviewing effective governance and governance excellence for our institutions. We wanted to do it in kind of a staged approach, to look at the bigger governance issues first and then start drilling down into the details around that particular policy.

We also did it in a collaborative manner. I mean, we did engage with postsecondaries to get their feedback. We solicited the advice of some outside help to make sure we're getting the most current best practices in that area. We did a thorough job, and it's now ready to go.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you.

Just to stick with the progress – and good to hear that – it sounded to me like the policy has been put to the 26 institutions, and of course they're various sizes and in various parts of the province. What's their opportunity for feedback to you? Collaboration: is it a work-in-progress, or do you think you've presented a final policy?

Mr. Skura: I would say that the policy that's out there now is final. It represents the culmination of work there. The institutions did have opportunity to provide feedback earlier on in the process around that. As with any policy, you know, after implementation and after we gain some experience in how the policy is used, if there's something that's horribly broken with it, we will definitely take a look at it, but we're pretty confident at this point that it reflects the input and feedback of our postsecondary institutions. It's a robust policy that deals with the concerns raised by the Auditor General. We think it's in a pretty good place right now.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you.

Unfortunately, we've seen some fraud and some scams and some, you know, misappropriation in the past, potentially, during this process. Are institutions still at risk of some money concerns?

Mr. Skura: We in the department and the institutions have taken a number of steps to address those things. From a department perspective, the minister meets on a quarterly basis with the board chairs of each of the institutions. The issue of internal controls and, in particular, some of the IT problems that we've experienced in the past have been an important part of those discussions.

My department, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, has convened an internal controls working group, so we've got representatives from each of the institutions that have been brought together to discuss the issues, to share best practices, and, you know, to try to minimize the risk of these things recurring. The individual institutions have all taken steps to enhance their internal controls.

Can I give you a hundred per cent guarantee that something isn't going to happen? No, because there's still that element of human error out there, but we're highly confident that we've taken the appropriate steps, that the institutions take this very seriously and are constantly in review of their internal control processes.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you.

I'm just wondering, again, about the individual institutions, you know, spread out around the province, all offering different, good services. Is the public able to see any individual, specific public indicators for individual institutions? Is there anything where a taxpayer, a concerned citizen, somebody that wants to be involved in this, could see what the individual institutions are held to account for?

Mr. Skura: The typical process that we follow, from an accountability perspective, right now is that the institutions develop a comprehensive institutional plan. That's what gets approved by the minister. That's what sets their priorities and their work for the upcoming year. It's essentially the business plan for the institutions. At the end of every year the institutions then prepare their institutional annual report. That will report on how they met, you know, the goals that they had set out for themselves in the comprehensive institutional plan. Really, the annual report is the principal document that I think Albertans should look to. I'd say that the annual reports are the key documents.

8:50

We're constantly, in the department, looking at ways to enhance this. I mean, there are always opportunities for new sources of data that are more timely, so we're constantly under that process of reviewing those things to see if there are better ways of demonstrating accountability.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you.

I'll pass, please, the remainder of my time to my colleague.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Barnes, and thank you, Mr. Skura, for being with us today with all of your colleagues here, who are delivering high-quality education to Albertans.

Mr. Skura, one of the performance indicators in the annual report is Albertans who are either employed or in further education after leaving a skills training program. On page 35 of the annual report performance indicator 2(a) notes that the percentage is steadily dropping, from 75 per cent in 2013 to only 65 per cent in 2017. My question to you is: what is the ministry specifically doing to improve the employment rates for recent graduates of skills training

programs? I know it's not always the outcome, but the goal, I think, is to ensure that we have employability of our recent graduates.

Mr. Skura: You know, there are a couple of things that we're doing in that regard. The department is monitoring those results. We have discussions on an individual basis with institutions to ensure that their programming is effective and meeting the needs of Albertans. The institutions themselves are constantly going through that review process on their programs. They are looking at improving programs that are in need of improvement. They're looking at maybe eliminating programs that no longer are relevant or no longer meet the needs.

One of the things that we've really been working on recently is better connection with industry in certain areas to make sure that we're meeting the needs of industry, of employers, with the skills that the institutions are providing.

Mr. Gotfried: We'll continue in the next rotation. Thank you, Mr. Skura.

Mr. Skura: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barnes, Mr. Gotfried.
Dr. Turner.

Dr. Turner: Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you to the folks from the ministry for coming today. I must say that as an Albertan I'm extremely proud of our advanced education system in this province. I was attracted to this province over 40 years ago because of the strength of the University of Alberta at that time. You know, over the years, particularly over the last four years, if I might say, we've really been making some strong advances and improving our standing throughout the world, actually, as a place for students to come for advanced education but also for individuals who can bring some real skills to this province to lead us, particularly in things like AI, and not just in high technology but in medicine as well as agriculture and a whole bunch of other things. I think Advanced Education has been doing a pretty good job.

I actually want to follow up on a comment that Mr. Skura made in his opening remarks about working on making sure that the pay and benefits of administrators and executive staff within the universities and colleges are reasonable and reflect, actually, the realities of working in Alberta. In the 2017-18 Advanced Education annual report it reads on page 38 that

government cut university and college president salaries, eliminated bonuses, and prohibited perks such as executive allowances. This brings the compensation of university and college presidents in line with the broader public sector, the national post-secondary market, and Albertans' expectations.

That last point is really important. What does an Albertan expect that some of these individuals would receive in terms of pay and benefits?

My question actually is: how much money is the government of Alberta saving by reducing these expenses for executive compensation, and where has the money been put to use?

Mr. Skura: Thank you for that question. As I mentioned, we in the department had embarked on an agencies, boards, and commissions review two, maybe three years ago. Part of that was the compensation review, and I'm going to talk a little bit about the protocol that we used in doing that before I directly answer your question.

We engaged a renowned compensation firm. They used to be known as the Hay Group. They're now known as Korn Ferry. They went on a very extensive survey of what comparable executives at

other institutions across Canada would be compensated, and they have an extensive database that they drew on to do that. One of the things we wanted to make sure of is that we, you know, ensured fair compensation for the work that the executives were doing and that we could remain competitive with the rest of the country, right? We wanted to make sure we could still bring in quality talent to head up our teams.

The first part of that was last summer, putting in a compensation framework for the presidents of each of our institutions. That was applicable to 20 of our institutions. It didn't apply to the independent academic institutions, nor did it apply to the Banff Centre because their governance structures are outside the scope of the Post-secondary Learning Act. The first part of that has application to the presidents. I think the amount we're expecting to save on an annual basis is \$1.6 million – correct, Dan? – and that's just the presidents.

You know, part of the strategy in implementing this was to have a two-year period, which is typically the acceptable period of time in common law, that would allow us to make changes in compensation without being subject to lawsuits. Our expectation would be that once the presidents' salaries are adjusted, that will trickle down to other levels of senior administration. That work is ongoing now, and we're expecting the plans from each of the postsecondary institutions on how they're going to deal with that next layer of executive compensation. Once we have that data, we'd be in a much better position to answer what the total savings are, but initially it is \$1.6 million for the presidents at each of those institutions.

To answer the second part of your question, we've permitted or we are permitting the institutions to retain those savings. Those will be reinvested back into institutional priorities.

Dr. Turner: Thank you very much.

I'll pass to my colleague Mr. Nielsen.

Mr. Nielsen: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and through you to our guests, again, thank you so much for all the work that you do for us as well as for Albertans. I guess that in the time that I have remaining, I've got a couple of questions here. We'll see how far I can get through.

If I could just direct you to page 27 of the Advanced Education '17-18 annual report, to a quote here: "Provincial funding supports the expansion of capital projects needed to increase student access and provincial research capacity, as well as preservation projects needed to maintain existing buildings." I was just wondering if maybe the department could outline the major capital projects that have been invested in over the past five years and tell us: are they online? Are they on time and on budget?

Mr. Skura: Yeah. Just so I don't miss anything, there were a number of significant projects over the last number of years. The University of Lethbridge destination project is the one that most recently was completed. That one was actually completed ahead of schedule and on budget, and it opened – well, it's not open yet, but the contractor turned it over to the institution within the last month or two, in January. I'm not very good with time. It just seems to fly by – except for right now.

We have the NAIT Centre for Applied Technology, the University of Calgary Schulich School of Engineering. NorQuest College opened up its Singhmar centre in the last couple of years. There's the Lethbridge College trades and technology project, and the University of Calgary MacKimmie complex project is under way right now at the University of Calgary.

9:00

In the capital plan – and work is just commencing now – the University of Alberta Dentistry/Pharmacy building is a very old historical building that's in need of some significant upgrades. Northern Lakes College is just beginning construction on a new facility up in High Prairie. We're doing some work on the district energy system at the University of Alberta. That's an energy system that's in need of some upgrades, and it not only supplies electricity to the university but also to the health campus in that university area.

Am I missing anything that you guys can think of?

I think that's the list that I have in front of me. We also continue to invest significantly in infrastructure maintenance in the province. You know, we recognize that maintaining our existing asset base is just as important as building new facilities, so that remains a priority for us in the department.

Mr. Nielsen: We'll continue next round.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nielsen. And thank you again for those answers.

Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to start on page 10 of the business plan. You've got performance indicator 3(a), the "percentage of clients reporting they are either employed or in further education or training after leaving a skills training program." The actual numbers have declined dramatically since 2013. The actual number beginning in 2013 was 75 per cent who were reporting they were either employed or in further education, and that dropped fully 9 per cent by 2016.

Now, I suspect that we all know that is a result of the overall economic downturn, and I won't expect the postsecondary system to be single-handedly responsible for turning around that ship. However, what I'm most interested in is: what specifically is the ministry doing to ensure the system is flexible and responsive to student needs during a downturn? How did the system pivot, or did it? Was it really just sort of steady as she goes and we'll keep doing what we've always done in what appears to be a significant economic and social transition that we're going through right now?

Mr. Skura: I think there are a couple of things that I would point to. Certainly, on the apprenticeship side, for example, we've seen a marked decline in the number of opportunities for apprentices to do the practical component of their training, so we've made adjustments to, you know, enrolment levels at the institutions to reflect that. As I mentioned in a response to a question I was asked earlier, I mean, the institutions and the department are constantly reviewing programming to make sure that we've got an appropriate mix of programming and that it's reflective of the needs of the economy.

Then the third thing I would mention as an example of something that we're really looking at pivoting is, you know, that last year government brought in a bill on economic diversification, and part of that was the creation of 3,000 seats in the technology area. We had pulled together a group, a technology advisory or a . . .

Mr. Rizzoli: Talent advisory.

Mr. Skura: Yeah. I always get the two Ts in the acronym mixed up.

. . . talent advisory committee on technology. It was comprised largely of industry reps in the high-tech area, and they certainly provided us with some very useful feedback in terms of skills. So we learned a lot from that experience, and I would certainly look in

the future to, you know, employ a similar model in the department to look at other areas as well.

Mr. Clark: Thank you for that, but here's my question. Why did it take until 2018 for you to pull that together? One of the first things you answered there was: we cut apprenticeship spaces. That feels like a reactive kind of thing, saying: well, I guess there aren't a lot of apprenticeship spots, so I suppose we'll cut this. What I'm curious about is why it took you until 2018 to respond to what was clearly a crisis dating back to 2014-15, when what was really needed was – we have engineers in this province, and we're very fortunate to have them. But often those engineers are chemical engineers or reservoir engineers, and there's a significant demand for those engineers to reskill into computer engineers. That, as far as I can tell, is something that really didn't happen within the postsecondary system perhaps until as recently as 2018-19. Why did it take so long to pivot?

Mr. Skura: Well, I think there are probably a couple of factors there. You know, I think the institutions themselves, just getting an understanding in terms of what the new skills are, took a little bit of time. I mean, we went through a fairly drastic or significant change in the economy, and it takes a little bit of time to sit back and redeploy resources into the areas that you think are going to have the biggest impact into the future.

The other thing I would point out is that during that time, other than the apprenticeship I mentioned, we didn't see an overall decline in enrolment, so I think a lot of it was a redeployment of resources at institutions into other areas. I would not say that we sat back and did nothing.

The Chair: Thank you for that, and thank you, Mr. Clark.

Moving on, Mr. Gotfried.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Back to my prior questions, Mr. Skura, with respect to the placement of graduates and the employment opportunities. Certainly, from some of my past work I know that postsecondary is very much focused on the placement of graduates as a measure of whether they're succeeding in delivering the appropriate education and direction of the programming. From your perspective, is the ministry doing a sufficient job in training Albertans through the postsecondaries for the jobs that exist in our economy, and if so, what is being done to ensure that these performance indicators improve over time in working with that? What are you specifically doing in your relationship with those postsecondaries to ensure that there is that communication between them, between industry, and also, obviously, with direction from yourselves as well?

Mr. Skura: That's an excellent question. It's one that we've actually been putting a fair bit of effort into in the department because it largely revolves around better use of the existing information resources that not only we have but the institutions have. We've been doing a significant amount of work on looking at how to better develop a set of measures that are more forward looking, more proactive. A lot of the measures that we have now are dependent on information that we get from the postsecondaries, from other agencies like Statistics Canada. Those tend to be backwards looking. They're not always timely.

One of the things we're looking at – and it's early days still; you know, we haven't decided – is maybe looking at some more proactive measures for skills training in the future, maybe look at some nontraditional sources of information that we could use. Now, there are some risks in doing that. If you go and you look at the data that's available on something like LinkedIn, for example, you want

to make sure that you fully understand what's behind that data before you start drawing some conclusions. But we are looking at some of those nontraditional sources in an effort to be more forward looking and more proactive in terms of the information that we have. It is an area that we clearly recognize we need to look at and do differently.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. One of the things that we came across in some of our research and some of the work done by the Auditor General's office is a little bit of a move away from the Campus Alberta focus that we've seen over the last few years, dating, I think, back to 2013, and some references that have been a bit vague over more recent years. Having worked on what was called Campus Calgary and some other organizations in the past, where there was some collaboration between and amongst the postsecondaries to not duplicate, to direct some of the learning and some of the sort of job-focused programs and curriculums more towards collaboration and nonduplication, what's happening with the whole Campus Alberta concept? Is it fading out? Is it being replaced by something? Where are we going with that in terms of working together between your department and the postsecondaries so that there's less duplication and more focus on these job opportunities?

Mr. Skura: Another excellent question. No, Campus Alberta isn't dead. Collaboration is still a priority for us. A couple of years ago we took a set of five principles to cabinet for endorsement, and one of those principles was around collaboration specifically. So that's one of the core five principles that are governing the system in Alberta.

9:10

As I mentioned, the minister has quarterly met with the board chairs from each of the institutions, and the board chairs of the institutions in the last year had actually set up a sub working group to look at the issue of collaboration. That's something that's still a very high priority because – you're right – we don't want to be unnecessarily duplicating courses. So that remains at the forefront. There are a number of examples out there right now of good collaboration between institutions. I mean, Athabasca University, for example, has been doing some excellent work with some of the northern colleges in terms of collaboration. So that remains a top priority.

Mr. Gotfried: Great. That's good to hear, and I hope that continues.

One of the things that we came across, again thanks to the good work of the Auditor General's department, is the access to the future fund, which has had no disbursements since 2015-2016. I find it a bit odd in a time when we're looking at retraining people for different jobs, different occupations that there have been no disbursements of this \$57 million asset towards finding opportunities in postsecondary for people to retrain and redirect their energies and their expertise and their knowledge and past education perhaps to greater opportunities in the current economy.

Mr. Skura: Yeah. The decision was made by government a few years ago now to suspend payments out of the access to the future fund. I would say, though, that, you know, there have been significant funding increases outside of the access to the future fund to the institutions. Over the last four years the Campus Alberta grant has seen 2 per cent annual increases, three of the four years we have provided tuition backfill to the institutions during the period of the tuition freeze. There have been some other targeted investments in postsecondaries over that time. I mentioned the TACT money for

the 3,000. So there has been funding that was increased, but there was a decision three or four years ago now to suspend payments.

Mr. Gotfried: Then why have that fund? Why has it not been collapsed into the greater . . .

Mr. Skura: Well, that's a question I think best directed to Treasury Board and Finance.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. Thank you.

In performance measure 1(b) in the annual report it indicates "percentage of recent post-secondary graduates who state that their program was worth the financial cost," page 23 of the annual report. In 2016, which was the last year reported, 83 per cent of graduates said that their program was worth the cost, which is below the target goal of 85 per cent. Can you tell us a little bit about this performance measure not meeting expectations and lack of opportunities across industries for students when they graduate and how we're going to actually deliver a measurable to them so that they actually believe that their program of study was worth the cost?

Mr. Skura: I think we touched on that a little bit earlier in the discussion, but I think it's just that continual review of programming at our institutions to make sure they remain relevant. I think it's about trying to get ahead of, you know, that skills demand in the future through things like we've done with the TACT group. I think the decline is probably in large part due to just the decline in the economy, and there hasn't been as much – it's been more difficult. Having kids that have both graduated recently from university, it is a lot more difficult now.

Having said that, though, I think, you know, an investment in education does pay dividends, certainly, in the long run. But we continually work with the institutions to make sure that they're addressing the real skills needs that are out there, and we're trying really hard to get a better indication of what those future . . .

Mr. Gotfried: So without having to add barista courses on the side, what are you doing specifically in the ministry to ensure that students have jobs when they graduate? What are we doing, actually, in working with the postsecondary institutions? I know many of them have placement programs for internships and other things, but also for final job placement: what specifically in terms of resources are being directed towards that measure, again, so we don't have to train them on the side to be baristas and do other jobs, which are completely irrelevant to the degrees that they're coming forth with?

Mr. Skura: Yeah. Again, I think it's a lot more effort into making sure that skills development is highlighted as part of these programs.

You know, we are really looking internally now at the whole concept of work-integrated learning. I hesitate to say looking at the apprenticeship model and other things, but certainly embedding in . . .

Mr. Gotfried: For the record I like your good barista, but I just want to make sure that we actually have people appropriately employed.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gotfried.

Thank you again for those answers.

Mr. Nielsen.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again through you to our guests, just to pick up where we left off on the last one, on page 27,

around those projects, I was just wondering: what was the rough investment that was made across those projects, and have the intended outcomes of these projects been achieved, or are they being achieved?

Mr. Skura: There's no total on my page here, so I'm going to have to do some quick math in my head, just rough.

Mr. Nielsen: Sure. You don't have to get exact here or anything.

Mr. Skura: Yeah. Those projects that I mentioned, which include the maintenance funding, total up to about \$499 million, so just a little bit less than \$500 million. Included in that, though, is about \$113 million in funding from the federal government under their strategic infrastructure fund and then about \$136 million that was included in our maintenance programming.

Mr. Nielsen: Fantastic.

Just to change gears a bit but still along the way, last year Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act, was passed, and among its priorities was the creation of 3,000 new technology spaces at our universities and colleges over the next five years. I was just wondering if you can tell us where the investments in those new tech talent seats are going and how they are improving accessibility to the skills training that's needed for a 21st-century workforce.

Mr. Skura: You know, we're into year 1 of that program. In year 1 the plan was to roll out 200 seats, and I think the funding with that was about \$2.6 million. We recognized, in rolling out the first 200 seats, that we wanted to solicit input from industry, so we were a bit cautious. That's why the number was fairly low. And to get those seats out, we looked largely at programs that already existed at institutions. Because those programs existed in institutions, we were able to deliver 406 seats, and those were dispersed across the province. So it wasn't just universities; it was a number of institutions that got those.

In year 2 we're looking at an additional 550 seats that will be deployed. In addition to that, though, we've also looked at some skills training. The Department of Labour has gone out with some RFPs to training providers, that look at some shorter term skills courses that can reskill people that have been displaced from the workforce, you know, with that view to technology. So that process is currently under way as well.

Mr. Nielsen: Excellent. Well, again, thank you for your work.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will pass my remaining time to MLA Kleinsteuber.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Nielsen and Mr. Chair. I'd like to just add to my colleague's comments and thank you and the department for the excellent work that's been done here. The question I have is this. According to the Advanced Education annual report, in 2017-18, through the community adult learning program, also known as CALP, "Advanced Education allocated more than \$17 million to 122 organizations to support the delivery of part-time, non-formal literacy and foundational learning opportunities," referred to, I think, on page 11. What exactly has the government invested in to support people who wish to upgrade their education and improve their literacy, in reference to that?

Mr. Skura: Yeah. In addition to the CALP programs – and the one thing I'll say about the CALP programs is that because they're community based, we've had some good success in leveraging the investment of those into, you know, excellent results, but we also

have funding that we provide directly for foundational learning and English as a second language training as well.

Can you give the numbers, David, in terms of what we provide?

9:20

Mr. Schneider: We supported 10,650 in '17-18.

Mr. Skura: Yeah. In '17-18 we . . .

The Chair: Sorry. Can I interrupt?

Mr. Skura: Yeah.

The Chair: Can you please go to the mic, state your name for those on the phones as well as for *Hansard*? Thank you.

Mr. Schneider: I'm David Schneider with Advanced Education. In '17-18 we funded about 10,650 Albertans to attend foundational learning programs, so that includes things like academic upgrading, ESL, basic skills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Okay. With that, I'll pass my time over to my colleague here, Ms Kazim.

The Chair: Three minutes.

Ms Kazim: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for coming and joining us today. Advanced Education is one of the very important matters to discuss as it helps people to think outside the box and helps improve many other areas in the system. The government of Alberta instituted a tuition freeze, which has been in effect since the 2015-16 academic year. A priority of this government has been to make life more affordable for everyday Albertans since the beginning of our mandate. My question is: how much has the tuition freeze saved students over the cost of their four-year degree?

Mr. Skura: Just give us a second.

Ms Kazim: No problem.

Mr. Skura: I know the number that has been – the reason I hesitate a little bit in giving you an answer is that it's largely dependent on the program you're in, right? So a four-year university degree: obviously, you will save more money than a one-year certificate program or, you know, a two-year diploma program at some institutions. Having said that, our calculations indicate that over a typical four-year degree, the amount of money saved by a student would be in the \$1,500 to \$1,600 range.

Ms Kazim: Okay. Or any percentage you may have when you do the relative comparison between the years or something and the information – that's fine if that's . . .

Mr. Skura: You're going to force us to do math again here.

Ms Kazim: No problem. That's all right.

Mr. Skura: My apologies.

Ms Kazim: No problem. That's all right.

My next question. Providing accessible and high-quality education in Alberta certainly depends on a variety of factors, one of which is the financial capacity of postsecondary institutions to be able to provide high-quality instruction and facilities to students. Given the lack of income growth created by the tuition freeze, how much backfill funding has been provided to the institutions to address this freeze?

Mr. Skura: As I had mentioned earlier, we provided tuition backfill to the institutions for three out of the four years. It's typically been in the range of \$17 million to \$18 million a year, so over the three years that would be \$51 million. The other thing I would say is that obviously the money is – the first year's \$17 million is built into the new baseline, so that carries through, and then we've added on \$17 million or \$18 million in each of those final years, 3 and 4.

Ms Kazim: Okay. Thank you very much.

I will pass my time to my colleague MLA Jessica Littlewood.

The Chair: I would say that you have six seconds.

Ms Littlewood: Do you have a number of how much capital was . . .

The Chair: A valiant attempt, I will say. A valiant attempt.

Mr. Clark, please.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm just going to continue on in a similar vein to the questions I was asking previously. I'd like to focus on my favourite question to ask in these committees and in the Legislature in estimates, and that is: how do we know? What are our measures, what are we measuring, what are we reporting, and how do we know? One of the things you talked about in your comments previous was that the total enrolment didn't drop, and that was your indication that we were being flexible in the system. Those two things seem like completely different topics. What I'm interested in is: do you have a measure, and can you table the information of the number of new tech spots created at the expense of other spots? Can you quantify that transition?

Mr. Skura: For today, no. I can't give you the answer off the top of my head . . .

Mr. Clark: No. That's fine. I knew that would be a fairly complex one.

Let me just dive back – and I do want to spend a bit of time on mental health as well because that's important. One last question on this in my very brief time. What was the process from 2015 through 2018 when you finally got to the point of setting up these tech committees you talked about, and why didn't you do that in 2015 or '16?

Mr. Skura: I think, you know, again, it was about looking at the process and deciding what was going to be the most effective way of doing that. I wouldn't want to give you the impression that nothing was happening. The institutions have the direct responsibility for determining what their programming is. They have the linkages in with industry. They were looking at that work, you know, as time was going on. Certainly, the priority for government around economic diversification was to look at the technology sector and how we could better identify those technology skills needed in the future to be more responsive. We do have some real gems in the province in terms of artificial intelligence. The University of Alberta AMII institute is third in the world, right?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you. I appreciate that. I apologize. I've got literally two minutes, and then something apparently may be happening at 9:45 that will be of great interest to all of us. I just want to go briefly, then, back to page 9. Strategy 2.4 talks about mental health, but there's no performance measure. There's no linking performance measures to outcomes. There's no performance indicator related to mental health. You've talked about

dollars and cents here, but really what I'm interested in is: is that the only measure? Is the only measure of mental health supports an output measure in terms of: we spent X number of dollars; mission accomplished? Are there any measures that measure outcomes on mental health within the postsecondary sector?

Mr. Skura: You know, the mental health funding has been in play now for a couple of years; it's going into its third year. So we are looking at how best to measure the outcomes. Our first priority was to set up or enhance the mental health capacity at each of the institutions, but the work is ongoing in terms of collecting that data.

Mr. Clark: Could I just ask this, then? I think we all agree that mental health is a very important topic, in particular at postsecondary. It tends to impact people at that stage in life; most people in postsecondary are younger. How did you know to spend the money in the first place? What numbers did you use, or was it really just a response to stakeholder requests? Were there metrics and data where you said, "Here's a quantifiable problem we're setting up to address," or was it, "Some people suggested we should do this"? And then how do we know that that money is being well spent in the right ways in the right places?

Mr. Skura: Yeah. You know, in 2016 10 of our postsecondary institutions participated in a national college health assessment survey, right? In that survey the outcomes were that 58 per cent of students felt hopeless, that 90 per cent of students felt overwhelmed, so there is a base metric that kind of pointed us into that direction. Clearly, we've heard it from stakeholders, we've heard it from student groups, and generally . . .

The Chair: Thank you for that response, sir. I think you can say a lot more because I think we're all very concerned about mental health, but we do need to move on.

Thank you, Mr. Clark.

Mr. Panda.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you to the deputy minister, key strategy 2.5 of the annual report is to "support post-secondary institutions in fostering healthy and safe campuses and communities through initiatives related to mental health and the prevention of addiction and sexual violence." That is on page 31 of the annual report. In August 2017 the ministry committed to providing institutions \$13.2 million to support the delivery of mental health initiatives. My question is: can the ministry indicate whether students' mental health has been improving over the last number of years as a result of this \$13.2 million funding?

9:30

Mr. Skura: Again, you know, a similar response as to Mr. Clark. The development of metrics is still under way. We're about to start year 3 of the mental health funding, so we will be looking at measuring the success of that program in the very near future.

Mr. Panda: So what's the status of the seven recommendations in the annual report to improve student mental health?

Mr. Skura: The very short answer to that is that work is under way on all of those things. Some of them have been, you know, in place, so we have provided funding. The roles have been defined between postsecondary and the public health systems. We don't want to be seen as duplicating a system at the campuses where services are already provided. What we want to ensure is that there is a seamless integration of the services provided by Alberta Health Services and the institutions. So that work is under way.

You know, we are co-ordinating with the larger regional health systems. We have provided grant funding to support indigenous postsecondary students. The access to 24-hour universal mental health: we've got work under way that's very close to being rolled out in terms of the establishment of a 211 mental health helpline for people to phone. Again, we continually review the student aid policy to ensure that students experiencing mental health are dealt with in a . . .

Mr. Panda: So how close are you to closing those recommendations with actions?

Mr. Skura: You know, again I would say that they're all well under way. I would say that we probably have most of them in place and will close out the recommendations in the next year or so.

Mr. Panda: Next year?

Mr. Skura: Yeah.

Mr. Panda: Okay. Does your ministry have any rating system of the performance measures for postsecondary institutions so that we can see which ones are taking concrete steps to improve student mental health?

Mr. Skura: Can you expand on that question a little bit?

Mr. Panda: Sure. I'm asking if your ministry has any rating system of performance measures for the postsecondary institutions to measure which ones are taking concrete steps to improve student mental health?

Mr. Skura: Part of the conditions of the grants we give out for the mental health funding is reporting back to the department on the successful execution of what institutions said they were going to do, so those continually come back in and are reviewed by the department. I don't have the specifics with me here today, but there is a process in place, when we issue the grant funding for mental health, where institutions do have to report back to us on the success of the initiatives that they've launched.

Mr. Panda: So can you share with us later on how you rank them, the various institutions?

Mr. Skura: It's not a ranking, per se, of how they're doing; it's more an evaluation of the services that they provide. So that part of it we could definitely provide at some point in the future. But we're not ranking them relative to, you know, one another.

Mr. Panda: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I'll share my time with Mr. Gotfried.

The Chair: You have seven seconds.

Mr. Gotfried: Have a great morning.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gotfried, for that.

Ms Littlewood.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you very much. Continuing off a couple of questions earlier about the money that was spent on capital projects across the institutions in postsecondary, could you give us a total number for the capital that was spent, invested, in the last four years?

Mr. Skura: With us today we only have the one- or two-year figures. We could provide you the four-year total. Just give us a second here.

The numbers that we do have with us today: over the last two years, so the year ending 2017 and the year ending 2018, it was about \$1.6 billion. Now, that number includes not only the funding provided by government; it would also include own-source revenue generated by the institution. Included in that number would be funding that institutions have, say, for building student residences. It could be donations they get from private donors, from other levels of government. So that \$1.6 billion is a two-year total, and it would include those other sources of funding. We'd have to do a little more analysis to break that down.

Ms Littlewood: That would be great. Thank you.

My next question is just about Campus Alberta. Would you be able to tell us who makes up that body currently? As I understand it, it's the institutions as well as things like Campus Alberta Strategic Directions Committee, eCampus Alberta, and Alberta Rural Development Network that have been part of it in the past. So if you would be able to tell us who makes that up now and how they are collaborating to actually work with each other to support each other and look for efficiency, where they would be able to perhaps save some money by working together so that they can redeploy those funds where they're needed. As we know, it's not necessarily about saving money. You might be able to save some money somewhere, but it doesn't really reduce the budget. It just is able to redeploy those funds somewhere else that they're needed already. So if you could answer those couple of questions.

Mr. Skura: Yeah. I think I partially answered it a little bit earlier. Campus Alberta essentially is the 26 institutions in the province that we provide funding to. We certainly, as I mentioned earlier, have looked at collaboration as a priority. We went to cabinet a couple of years ago. We had endorsement of the five principles that I mentioned earlier, and collaboration is one of those. Again, we are looking to institutions to identify opportunities where they can work together to ensure that they're not re-creating curriculum for courses, for example, better partnerships in terms of delivery of courses. I know that institutions, some of the smaller rural colleges, for example, will work with the major universities to have courses delivered in their local communities on a regular basis. There is some sharing of things like curriculum for some of the smaller courses.

Again, with the board chairs that meet on a regular basis, we have a sub working group established that is looking specifically at opportunities for those instances of collaboration. So it's a dynamic thing. It's something that's changing on a regular basis. We have actually embedded in the legislation now the six-sector model, a collaboration piece on that. That's actually embedded in legislation.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you very much.

I'll pass the rest of my time to MLA Carson, please.

The Chair: You have 27 seconds, sir.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much. In the Advanced Education 2017-2018 annual report it explains that the "government is committed to providing stable and predictable funding for the post-secondary [education] system." This is a theme that our government has been committed to over the last few years. I'm just wondering, specifically in the postsecondary education sphere, what that means, and what . . . [Mr. Carson's speaking time expired] Oh. Okay. I tried.

The Chair: Well, you will have another opportunity here. We are going to go into a three-minute rotation with the opposition, government, and third party. There will be no questions read into the record, so please use your time wisely.

We'll start with Mr. Gotfried.

9:40

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you. I just have some questions with respect to the student loans receivable. That has increased from 2016-17 to \$2.5 billion of receivables on the loans, and the department's allowance for uncollectable loans has increased 7 per cent over the same period. You know what? We're all, I think, aware that we need to have student loans programs to ensure accessibility to postsecondary education, but I also would assume that your department is looking at these receivables turning into debt or uncollectable debt.

What are you doing in terms of analysis of this situation? I know I've looked at the federal programs, and we've written off billions of dollars of student loans at the federal level. What are you doing in collaboration perhaps with the federal student loans program to look at risks: the risk of increasing interest rates, the fact that many students are not finding gainful employment to pay back their loans? What are you doing in terms of looking at that entire profile on how we can manage the student loans program better and also manage the risk better?

Mr. Skura: I think that for this question, because I need a break, I'm going to turn it over to my ADM Andy Weiler.

Mr. Weiler: Thank you very much. This is something that we're always aware of because the one thing that we know is that people are concerned about the amount of debt they're carrying after school. A couple of things that we have noticed is that there seems to be a direct correlation – a better indication of the ability of people to repay their loans is about their median income. If we look at the last six years, sort of the average student loan has gone from about \$18,000 upon graduation to around \$22,000, but we've also noticed during that time that the median income has gone up around the same amount. There's been some fluctuation, but it's about \$4,000 overall. Then if you look at our financial default rate, actually it stayed fairly flat over the last six years as well. It got to a high of about 6.1 per cent two or three years ago. It's down to about 5.4 per cent right now.

Mr. Gotfried: Is that fairly current stats?

Mr. Weiler: Yeah. In '16-17 was the first year that we introduced a statistical profile for student aid, which is currently available on the Advanced Education website. We're in the process of finalizing a 2017-18 statistical profile as well. What we do is take a look at a variety of sources of data that we have, including things like a debt manageability survey that we do, also some graduate outcome surveys where we ask very specific questions around student aid. We take a look at other data that comes into the department, and we put together a statistical profile which really breaks down the impact of student aid for learners, their ability to repay, their thoughts about student aid and the value of getting loans and grants through the government, providing them that accessibility to postsecondary institutions.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gotfried.

Moving on to Mr. Carson again. You have the opportunity to ask your questions.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much. Straight to the point here. How have stable funding increases for postsecondary institutions made it easier to plan and expand on the quality of programs we're able to offer?

Mr. Skura: I mean, I think the simple answer is that when you know what you're going to get from budget to budget, it just makes planning that much easier. Over the last four years the commitment from government has been 2 per cent increases on the year-over-year budget, and that applies to the entire Campus Alberta grant. Every institution in the province has received that funding consistently over each of the last four years. For the most part we haven't looked at major redistributions of funding between institutions. We've kept the baseline that each institution has and applied a 2 per cent increase to that.

Mr. Carson: Thank you.

Just changing gears a little, all five of the ministry performance measures have target levels consistent with actual results for the past five years. How do these measures inform the department on what can be learned or the changes required to improve future results?

Mr. Skura: I think there are a couple of things with respect to the performance measures. Again, you know, part of the issue is around the stable postsecondary education structure. We haven't seen major fluctuations in trends. Because there's been a level of stability across the system both in the number of institutions and the types of programming that they're offering and the funding levels, we haven't seen volatile changes in the system.

I mentioned a little bit earlier that, you know, we are looking at developing a comprehensive system of performance measurement and evaluation, and we are looking at development of new measures that we have used in the past, with a view to being more meaningful with those. Like I say, a lot of the measures that we use now are dependent on historical-type information that we get from the institutions, from industry partners, and from other government organizations, like Statistics Canada. Those are lagging indicators. Those are ones that come in after the fact, and then we have to do some work to bring them into our measures. What we want to do, where we want to move – and it's going to take some time – is looking at more timely, relevant data. I think that's what the expectation now is in the digital age, to have more instantaneous, relevant information, more timely information. We're certainly looking at those things to make them a little more useful for Albertans.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. Clark, you have three minutes, sir.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. I'm just going to keep going on the questions we started on mental health. You started to answer, talking about how there were some metrics that you used, or some surveys, to inform the mental health strategy. I'm very glad to hear that. I am a little frustrated, though, that there are no measures whatsoever in the business plan. While I can hope that there is some work that's going on internally to measure that, from a position as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and my job having some oversight and asking these questions, I'd like to see some of that reflected in your business plan. I guess my question to you is: (a) can we or will we see measures in future business plans, and (b) will those measures be measures of outcomes, not measures of inputs – we spent X number of dollars, budget increased by, that sort of thing – but will they be actual outcomes in terms of mental health results in the postsecondary system?

Mr. Skura: As I had indicated, we are looking at more useful, relevant measures along a wide variety of things. You know, we still are in the early days on the mental health stuff, and we are working very closely with institutions in terms of how effective we are in mental health. We will look at possible measures for mental health outcomes going forward. We don't have any developed at the moment, but we will look at that, and it'll be a decision on what gets published that will be made at some point in the future.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. I guess, you know, you've talked about being in touch with institutions – very important – but I think it's equally important that you're engaging with students as well and their representatives and with mental health experts in Alberta Health Services as well and that those measures are broadly distributed and made fully transparent.

Mr. Skura: I was very remiss in not – you know, as we developed a strategy around mental health, we did have a very robust process. We did pull together stakeholders both from Alberta Health Services and student groups and the institutions. So yes, we do engage those groups, particularly students, very much as we develop these programs.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. As this election looks like it's about to be imminently called, I can assure you that this is going to be something that's a focus for us and the Alberta Party in this coming election, and I will continue to push hard for mental health supports within postsecondary institutions but also more broadly. I think I would like to see some more connection between the large organizations of government, between postsecondary education, health care. There seems to be some good connection between postsecondary and K to 12 in terms of dual credit. I think that's good. I'd like to see something similar in postsecondary and mental health as it relates to AHS.

Thank you.

The Chair: My apologies for the interruption. I received notice of the dissolution of the 29th Legislature, which ends all business of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, including its committees. Accordingly, this meeting is adjourned.

Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 9:49 a.m.]

