

Responses to Questions Raised
Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Ministry of Advanced Education
May 26, 2020

Question 1

Mr. Toor: My question is: on page 80, if you look at the multiple statements regarding international students and their financial contribution to the provincial treasury, while their contributions appear to have exceeded budget expectations, I just need to know if the department can share with Albertans the tangible and intangible value of international students and what, if any, initiative . . .

Response:

International students have a significant and positive impact on Alberta's economy. Spending from international students supports over 10,000 jobs in communities across the province. International students also provide an additional revenue stream for post-secondary institutions that helps to improve the financial sustainability of Alberta's post-secondary system.

Equally important, international students contribute new ideas and global knowledge that enriches the quality of teaching and learning for all learners in Alberta. The presence of international students helps to create diverse campus communities and encourages learners to acquire the global skills and knowledge they need to be successful in the global marketplace.

International students also help Alberta achieve its research and innovation priorities. International students represent almost half of graduate level learners in key programs, including STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and mathematics) programs. Every day, international talent is helping Alberta solve challenges in healthcare, artificial intelligence and robotics, clean technology, agriculture, and other new and emerging fields.

With years of experience living and working in Canada, many international students are keen to stay in the province after graduation and to contribute meaningfully to Alberta's economy. International students help Alberta create the talented, diverse workforce that attracts companies and investors. Some international students will start businesses, invest in Alberta communities, and create jobs across the province. Others will help to diversify Alberta's economy and to fill labour shortages in new and emerging industries.

Alberta's upcoming International Education Strategy for post-secondary education will ensure that international students continue to be valuable members of Alberta institutions and communities for many years to come.

Question 2

Ms Renaud: Page 16 of the annual report states that in 2018 48,200 apprentices were registered in Alberta. Can you tell me what percentage of these apprentices is labelled as disabled or accessed funding for accommodation?

Response:

Information on disabilities is not collected from apprentices.

However, in cases where apprentices require special accommodations for any reason, information is kept on record in the apprenticeship database (ATOMS). A 'special needs' restriction' is added to the

apprentice's files signaling staff to make sure the accommodations are made as required. These accommodations may or may not be due to a disability. Distinguishing those who may have a disability is not possible from that information.

Additionally, some information was collected in past iterations of the biennial survey of apprenticeship graduates. The apprenticeship graduates were asked if they accessed learning supports (e.g., study skills courses, tutoring, exam readers, sign language interpreters) during the classroom instruction portion of their learning. In the survey of 2016/17 apprentice graduates, 17% indicated that they had accessed learning supports. However, the use of learning supports does not equate to having a disability.

Question 3

Mr. Dach: How many people were employed at Collège Saint-Jean in 2018/19?

Dr. Clarke: That we don't know offhand.

Mr. Dach: If you could respond to that in writing, I would be appreciative of that, including instructional and, of course, ancillary staff as well. I just want to get an idea as to how many job losses would result if the institution actually failed.

Response:

From the 2018-19 annual report under the French Language Agreements (signed off by the University of Alberta Provosts Office), Campus Saint-Jean reported:

- 34 tenured instructors
- 78 sessional instructors (full and part-time)

Question 4

Mr. Dach: I'm one of the 268,000 Albertans who identify as French speakers, and I know that I benefited from Collège Saint Jean providing teachers from the postsecondary role as French language instruction. It's the only institution in Alberta that provides postsecondary instruction in French. What is the demand annually for teachers who are able and qualified to teach in French, either in immersion or to teach the language itself? How many new teachers do we need to provide each year?

Dr. Clarke: That I would not know. That would be something that the Ministry of Education would be able to articulate but not Advanced Education.

Mr. Dach: But Advanced Ed is the one who will be teaching, instructing those new teachers, so I would imagine that there would be some communication between yourself and Education as to what the demand would be on an annual basis for the teachers who are qualified to teach in French.

Dr. Clarke: That would be a direct relation between the deans of education and the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Dach: As far as the role of Collège Saint-Jean, can you tell me what percentage of that demand Collège Saint-Jean might supply for new teachers qualified to teach in French each year?

Dr. Clarke: Again, that's a question that the Faculty of Education and Faculté Saint-Jean would be able to answer more accurately than we and the Ministry of Education because they oversee the overall number of teachers that are required.

Mr. Dach: All right. Hopefully, you can get that through Faculté Saint-Jean and provide it to the committee, please.

Ms Hoffman: I just want to start by acknowledging that there was, I believe, an agreement signed in the 1970s between the Oblates and the province regarding adequate funding for, at that time under a different name, Collège Saint-Jean, essentially. I wanted to reinforce our desire for a written response to the questions asked around staffing levels, et cetera, and, given that French is an official language, our role in Advanced Education in supporting French as an official language in our province and the fact that that continues to be an option. So we'd love all of those questions asked by my colleague Mr. Dach responded to in writing if at all possible, and if not, we'd like to know why not.

Response:

Department staff confirmed with Alberta Education that there is no specific data available on the actual annual demand for French Language teachers, or the percentage of that demand that Campus Saint-Jean would supply.

Community stakeholders have indicated that much better data, analysis and forecasts are needed to identify specifically how many French language teachers are needed on an annual basis.

Question 5

Ms Hoffman: That would be great, and how you measure success would be great. In turn, obviously, looking back, we want to identify what the gaps are and how, moving forward, we can support organizations in meeting the objectives of the annual report. Of course, it's great to hit all these goals, but if we don't give you the tools and the flexibility and the resources to be effective in that, then we haven't lived up to our obligations. So I'd really appreciate you getting back to us in writing on that. Perhaps the department can answer around how they're measuring the success of – it was between August 2017 and March 2019 – a \$13.2 million investment province-wide for mental health on campus. I'd like to know some of the baselines, like how many staff were hired, what the number of students was that accessed the services, how many did multiple visits, those types of things. In terms of those objectives that are outlined in the annual report, how were they measured, and how do we track our success?

Mr. Leclaire: We maintain our investment. For the specific details around the reporting requirements that you're asking for, I'll have to get back to you on that. I don't have that with me at this time from that perspective, so my apologies.

Ms Hoffman: And is it possible to do a year-over-year? I know it was something that was initiated in '17 and that we're looking at '18-19, so sort of how has that evolved in the two years since those were put in place and, yeah, the measurables around success of that investment in terms of addressing student mental health? Then, of course, if it could relate back to outcome 2.4, point 4, around integrating on campus with the larger regional supports, that would be great. It sounds like all of that will probably have to be followed up in writing unless you wanted to add anything else.

Response:

- We do not yet have enough data to do a comparison of year-over-year data.
- Although it will take the new program a few years to build a reliable data set, post-secondary institutions have begun reporting data that indicates an impact from the Post-secondary Student Mental Health (PSMH) Grant on students.

- We are measuring success of the PSMH through indicators including access to care and mental health promotion, as well as systemic coordination.

Access to Care

- In 2018/2019, at the 20 institutions¹ that provided data regarding the number of counsellors and students, there were 213,665 unique students enrolled.
- At these institutions, 103.97 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) counsellors provided 52,958 non-clinical mental health appointments.
- Institutions have also started tracking appointments and demographics of participants to better inform campus mental health procedures and policies.
- Institutions have begun uploading their support services to 211 Alberta so students can be referred to on campus services when they, or those supporting students, are looking for resources.
- 24 of 26 institutions use or have used PSMH Grant funds to create and maintain crisis protocols and procedures when students are in distress.
- Fourteen institutions are implementing or have implemented early alert programs through the PSMH Grant, which notify staff when a student may require extra support or an intervention.

Mental Health Promotion

- As of March 31, 2019, eighteen post-secondary institutions are developing or have developed mental health strategies, and seven more are implementing a strategy developed in previous years.
- All post-secondary institutions are using the PSMH Grant to increase the capacity of campus communities to respond to or cope with mental health concerns by training students, faculty, and staff.
- Institutions have also reported an increase in in-class presentations on mental health and mental health awareness events.

Coordination

- All 26 post-secondary institutions are actively part of a regional committee. These committees are making strides to smooth transitions for post-secondary students to clinical care and mental health supports in the communities in which they live.
- Regional committees are made up of post-secondary institutions, Alberta Health Services, community providers, and, often, the K – 12 system.
- To coordinate transitions from non-clinical campus-based services to clinical services provided by the public health system, AHS has established working relationships with regional coordinating committees and individual institutions to meet student needs.
- We have also seen a marked increase in participation from our institutions in Healthy Campus Alberta Community of Practice (HCA).

Other initiatives

- First Nations Colleges are receiving funds from Advanced Education to provide their students with non-clinical mental health care and mental health promotion.
- We have also provided funding to the Community Adult Learning System to train their tutors in Psychological First Aid.

¹ The King's University, Lakeland College, NorQuest College, and Northern Lakes College did not report this information. Athabasca University and Banff Centre's data is not included as it is not comparable to the entire system.

Question 6a

Mr. Eggen: Do you have a differential of the tuition that was paid by students that were in online programs in 2018-19? We know that there's a different value that's inherent between a live classroom experience and an online experience. I'm just curious to know if you could provide some specific information around the difference between an in-classroom experience tuition rate and then perhaps paying online tuition for any specific program in 2018-19. Of course, a lot of people are thinking about this now, here in 2020.

Response:

The Government does not collect tuition information based on the mode of delivery (i.e. online or in-person). Rather, the Tuition and Fees Regulation speaks to "average tuition fees per student" across all programs, and authorizes the Minister to establish how "average tuition fees per student" is calculated. Therefore, Advanced Education collects information about average tuition and fees per full-time-equivalent.

Question 6b

I just want to ask about the dual credit program partnership. It showed a lot of promise. You had 41 school authorities signing up specifically to train students to work as health care aides in seniors' lodges, long-term care, home care. Very successful programs, I know. How did the dual credit program assist Alberta Advanced Education with their performance goals? I'm very curious to know that because, of course, I think that we saw a lot of promise in the program. I'd hate to see it being compromised.

The same with the career and technology studies. This is another program that was super successful, with more than 30,000 students participating up till 2019.

Response:

Dual credit programming facilitates learner pathways into post-secondary and the labour market by supporting students in grades 10-12 to earn high school and post-secondary credits toward a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree, including apprenticeship education. This facilitates a key objective in the Ministry's 2020-23 Business Plan – 1.2: increased awareness of the value of skilled trades and encouraging Albertans to pursue apprenticeship education to meet labour market demands.

Advanced Education supports the province's lead on dual credit, Education, in its management of shared K-12 and post-secondary policy and processes. Many institutions, school authorities, and businesses take part in offering students dual credit via different delivery and partnership models across Alberta, and are able to connect and collaborate through the Advanced Education facilitated Dual Credit Articulation Committee. To date, 357 post-secondary courses from 42 school authorities for 24 institutions have received a secondary dual credit course code through the shared Education approval process. Start-Up Funding Applications have also been approved for 41 school authorities offering dual credit with post-secondary partners in 2018, 32 in 2019, and 26 in 2020.

Question 6c

The registered apprenticeship program was also super successful. I'm curious to know if you were measuring the performance metrics to demonstrate how the RAP and CTS programs were assisting you to meet your performance targets here in Advanced Education.

Response:

Data on RAP and CTS are not used as performance measures in the Ministry's Annual Report. However, RAP apprentices and students who have successfully completed a CTS Apprenticeship Pathway and subsequently become registered as an apprentice are included in the count of new and total registered apprentices and reported in the annual AIT Statistical Profiles. Additionally, metrics specific to these two programs are collected and tracked to gauge their uptake and the success of the apprentices once in a regular apprenticeship program.

- There were 952 RAP apprentices in high school in 2019. More than 5,700 individuals who began as RAP apprentices since 1992 and 270 who began through a CTS Apprenticeship Pathway since 2014 have gone on to complete an apprenticeship program. As of December 31, 2019, 135 registered apprentices began in a CTS Apprenticeship pathway.
- The latest survey of apprenticeship graduates (2018/19) measured the proportion of apprentices who had previously participated in apprenticeship pathways programs such as RAP at 21% and CTS at 8%. A large proportion of the participants indicated that these programs were valuable pathways into apprenticeship.
- Recent research on apprentices who transitioned from an apprenticeship pathway program into a regular apprenticeship program shows that 72% of RAP apprentices transitioned into an apprenticeship program. At the time of the research, 30% of those transitioned apprentices had completed their apprenticeship program and another 31% were still registered. Similar research is not currently possible on those who were registered in a CTS Apprenticeship Pathway as some of the data required is held by Alberta Education and not accessible by AE staff.

Question 7

Mr. Eggen: I have questions that were dealing with the annual report on page 12. The Advanced Education Learning Clicks ambassador team engaged more than 18,000 students to teach about postsecondary education, "who in many cases, felt [that] post-secondary education was not an option for them." I'm just curious if the ministry, when evaluating this program, is going to continue with the program, for one thing. But did they enumerate what information was being given from the students? Were they talking about tuition being too expensive or if there were regional programming cuts that were involved in that or other data collection from the Learning Clicks ambassador team and the information that you might have gathered from students? In regard to the foundational learning program – this is on page 13 of the advanced 2018-19 report. Foundational learning, of course, is reading, writing, English as a second language, digital skills. Advanced Education certainly recognized foundational learning as an increasing need here in the province. I'm just curious to know: what are the value metrics associated with this? Of course, this program is also in jeopardy, and we need to make sure that we have the value of that program clearly articulated so that we can move forward to ensure that it is adequately funded in the future. Outcome 1.4. In accordance with supporting the principles and the objectives of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, our government, of course, invested in the First Nations college grant, the indigenous initiatives grants, indigenous student awards, and the community adult learning program as well. I'm just curious to know if the ministry recognizes the value of meeting or exceeding these investments, considering, you know, how this investing in First Nation education and curriculum and so forth seems to be in jeopardy with this government. If we could make sure that we have a clear articulation of the value of First Nations education, Métis education, indigenous peoples in our postsecondary institutions.

Further to that, we know that many postsecondary institutions – the University of Calgary is included.

Response:

The 2018/2019 annual report includes performance indicator 3.a, which reports the percentage of clients reporting they are either employed or in further education or training after leaving a skills training program. This data is collected from a survey conducted by Community and Social Services (CSS) of Foundational Learning Supports recipients after they complete their program as part of the requirements of the Labour Market Transfer Agreements with the federal government. Advanced Education has limited flexibility and autonomy to ensure relevance of this survey to the mandate of Advanced Education.

- Advanced Education is working to review foundational learning as a whole.
- The ministry is developing meaningful metrics for foundational learning, such as transitioning into post-secondary education, (not just the funding of its participants) that will more appropriately reflect the ministry's mandate.

Learning Clicks

- The ministry is no longer offering in-person presentations through the Learning Clicks program. As part of the ministry's commitment to accessibility, it will continue to provide post-secondary planning information and resources online while assessing both the informational needs of students and how best to deliver that information to them to inform future initiatives.
 - Previously, the Learning Clicks program would conduct anonymous user research surveys with students to gather a better understanding of their goals for after high school, preferences for accessing post-secondary planning information, and their barriers to attending post-secondary which was used to inform Learning Clicks program content development and delivery methods.
 - Of those students who indicated that they were not planning to attend post-secondary after high school, the top reasons for not planning were:
 - I just don't know what I want to do yet (53%)
 - I'm tired of being in school (37%)
 - I want to focus on making money/working (31%)
 - Post-secondary is too expensive (31%)
 - When asked what aspect of planning for post-secondary was the most difficult, students responded with:
 - Deciding what they want to do (36%).
 - Financial (26%)
 - Academics/not meeting entrance requirements (11%)
 - When asked how students would prefer to learn about their options for after high school, the top answers were:
 - Family and friends – 53%
 - From recent high school graduates – 26%
 - Teachers, counselors, or coaches – 25%
 - Through classroom presentations – 25%
 - University, college or technical school websites – 18%

Foundational Learning

- Advanced Education is dedicated to funding foundational learning through many diverse funding allocations, including:
 - \$97.3 million in Foundational Learning Supports;

- \$18.1 million for the Community Adult Learning Program, which serves over 16 thousand learners annually;
- \$1 million to First Nations Colleges through a Literacy Grant, which helped nearly 400 learners in 2018/2019;
- Additionally, provincial funding supports Comprehensive Community Colleges offer a broad range of foundational learning programs and engage in regional stewardship of foundational learning opportunities.
- Advanced Education has maintained a strong financial investment in foundational learning, and these funding allocations are supplemented with community connectedness supports, such as volunteer tutors.
- Investing in foundational learning contributes social and economic value to Alberta. Positive impacts include:
 - Reduced unemployment: the unemployment rate is 2–4 times higher among those with little schooling;
 - Reducing unemployment leads to reduced crime and costs associated with the justice system;
 - Higher income and improved quality of jobs for learners, leading to a greater participation in the economy;
 - Increased self-esteem for learners, which creates more integrated citizens;
- Improved impact on health and health-care costs: low literacy individuals have more workplace accidents, take longer to recover, and more often misuse medication due an inability.

Indigenous

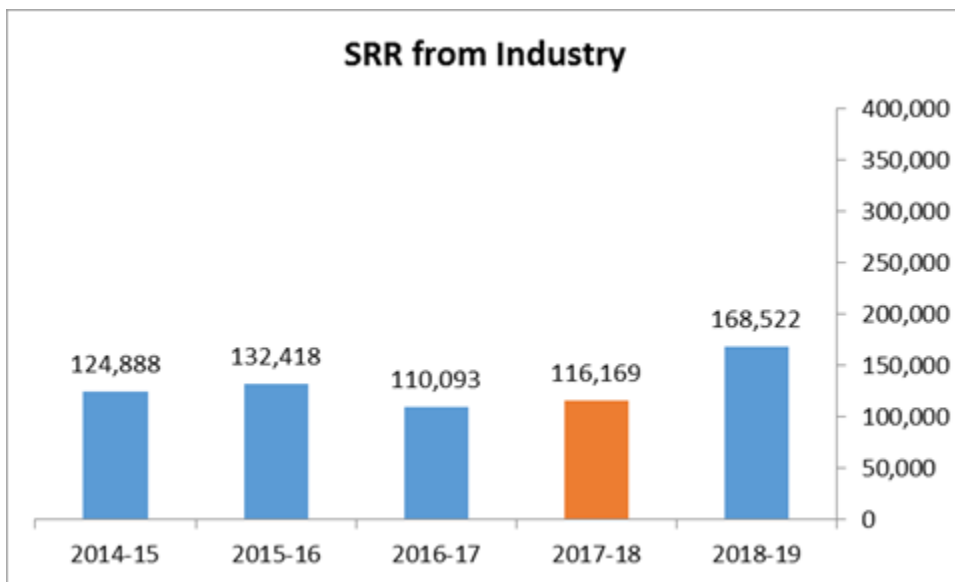
- Alberta invests in Indigenous education through the following funding streams:
 - Since 2017, Alberta has provided \$500,000 towards Inspire Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries, Scholarships and Awards program.
 - For 2019/20, Alberta provided \$5,283,000 through the Indigenous Careers Award.
 - The First Nation College Grant provides \$640,000 annually to each First Nation College, where \$200,000 is earmarked for literacy and foundational learning.
 - Indigenous initiatives funding for 2019-20 was \$0 and for 2020/21 it is \$1.064M.
- Since 2013, Indigenous postsecondary student enrolment has increased in Alberta.
 - In the 2013/14 academic year 10,280 learners enrolled in PSIs self-identified as Indigenous. In 2018/19, this number increased to 12,951.
 - This is a total increase of 2,671 self-identified Indigenous learners.
 - This data only accounts for self-identifying indigenous students and does not include numbers from First Nation Colleges, meaning that the above documented number may be higher.
- Indigenous students obtaining higher education in PSE have an important impact on Alberta’s economy.
 - When compared to their high school drop out counterparts, Indigenous people will earn more per hour with a Bachelor Degree or higher.
 - First Nations women will earn \$13.99 more per hour.
 - Métis women will earn \$7.16 more per hour,
 - First Nation men will earn will earn \$6.55 more per hour, and
 - Métis men will earn \$3.09 more per hour.
 - Non-monetary related benefits of obtaining higher education in Alberta include:
 - Improved health,
 - Shorter durations of unemployment,
 - Decreased criminality,
 - Increased productivity, and
 - Reduced welfare dependence.

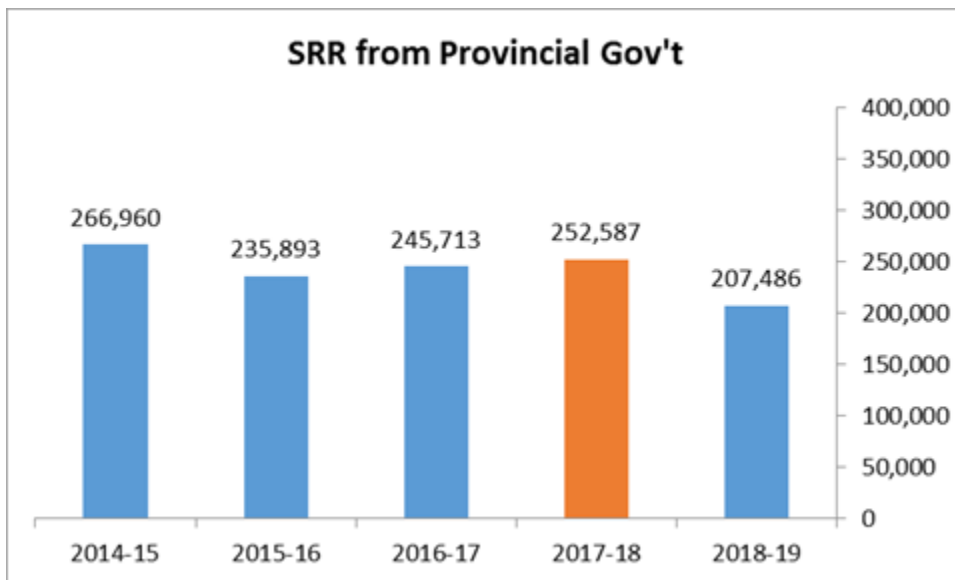
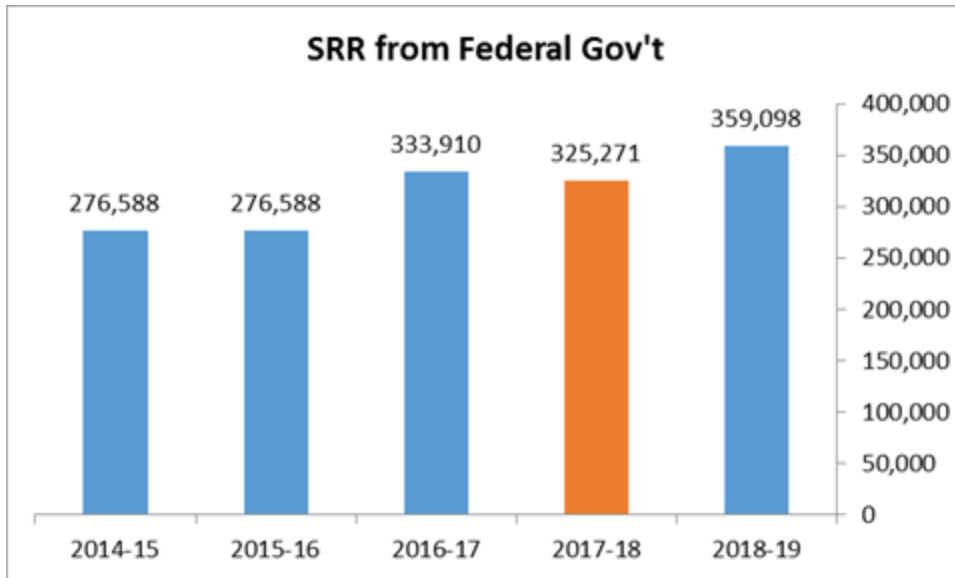
Question 8

Ms Rosin: On page 53, performance indicator 2(a) indicates sponsored research revenue. The latest figure reported is \$933 million, which is approximately \$100 million more than two years ago. The majority of the dollars are from federal and provincial governments with only 12 per cent coming from industry. I'm wondering if the higher level of research revenue was a result of greater government or industry investment. Is this share of industry revenue increasing proportionately, or is it static or decreasing?

Response:

- To address the first question: When comparing the 2017-18 data with the 2015-16 data, the increase of \$115 Million in total sponsored research revenue (SRR) was primarily fueled by increases to SRR from federal, provincial, other government, not-for-profit, and endowment sources. Consistent with previous years, the federal and provincial governments remain the largest funders of SRR.
- To address the second question: The share of SRR from industry was relatively stagnant between 2016-17 and 2017-18 (at 12%). However, the latest data from 2018-19 (17%) indicates that industry has increased their relative SRR contributions to the level higher than 2015-16 (16%). AE and EDTT have recently established a Research Working Group with the CARU VPRs that is investigating further Team Alberta approaches to stimulate research activities, including increasing industry partnership, all with an eye towards increasing external research investment levels.
- Below are three graphs created to help readers more easily understand the trends of SRR from industry, federal and provincial governments.





Question 9a

Mr. Reid: I'd like to go to the ministry for recommendations from the 2015 Auditor General's report, that had several recommendations, two of those related to the guidance of postsecondary education institutions with regard to for-profit and cost-recovery ventures. According to the department they are not yet ready for follow-up audits. Can the department please update us on the status of these outstanding recommendations?

Response:

The department has set in place guidelines on alternative revenue, effective April 1, 2019. These guidelines have not been in place long enough for the Auditor General to assess the effectiveness of the guidelines. However, the department feels the recommendations are fully implemented.

Question 9b

Subsequently, until the guidance is formally prepared for our postsecondary institutions, how is the department ensuring that proper checks are in place when our colleges and universities pursue for-profit and cost-recovery ventures? One of particular interest to me is the Hotel Alma at the U of C. How integrated is this project into the academic mandate and programming of the U of C? I'd like information and examples. I'm wondering if employees are primarily recruited from the student population, and what percentage of the hotel guests is on-campus versus off-campus visitors?

Response:

The pursuit of for-profit and cost recovery ventures is the responsibility of the board of governors of post-secondary institutions. Institutions must weigh the risks in pursuing such activities to ensure it aligns with their risk tolerances. The guidelines on alternative revenue provide direction on such ventures, and attempt to align risk and reward for institutions and government. Institutions are also asked to submit a business case using a template provided by the government to mitigate risk by ensuring the institutions are providing adequate information about the project/venture, including costs, financial analysis, community engagement, knowledge/competencies etc.

Question 10

Mr. Gotfried: I'm going to ask a question with respect to student loan defaults. Does the department track institution and/or faculty or program or any other metrics with respect to student loan defaults?

Response:

Two different methodologies are used to produce default rates for different purposes.

- The financial default rate is a percentage used to estimate the amount of loans receivable that could potentially become collectable over the lifespan of the loan. It is based on the dollar value of the loan portfolio and considers other factors such as projected recoveries. An overall rate is produced annually by fiscal year (April 1 to March 31). Rates by institution and/or faculty or program are not available using this methodology. The rate is available publicly in AE Annual Report and the annual Student Aid Statistical Profiles.
- The three-year cohort default rate is used internally by AE and the methodology is also used for the Canada Student Loan Program. It is defined as the proportion of borrowers who defaulted in the first three years of repayment over the total number of borrowers that went into repayment in that loan year. A cohort is defined as all borrowers whose loans went into repayment in a loan year. Cohorts are followed for three years as most defaults happen in this time period. Students who returned to study in the three-year period are excluded from the cohort. This rate is available by number of borrowers in default and dollar amount in default overall and by institution by loan year.

Question 11

Mr. Gotfried: I'll move on to another question. The message from the minister on page 2 states:
We are also focused on reducing provincial red tape and mandates on universities and colleges. We intend to give postsecondary institutions more freedom to innovate and compete by reducing the regulatory burden and allowing them to reach their full potential.

Can the department provide a tangible update on red tape reduction initiatives and how the removal of regulatory burden will encourage innovation?

Response:

As government continues to work toward achieving red tape reductions, Advanced Education is looking to reduce requirements in policies and forms that eliminate frequency of reporting requirements, consolidating processes, and the eliminating unnecessary/duplicative requirements. Advanced Education's red tape reduction measures are aimed at helping institutions reach their highest potential by removing unnecessary burden so they can focus their resources, and time and effort towards goals that are in the best interest of students and the province. This helps ensure that Alberta maintains the ability to globally innovate and compete in attracting students, researchers and investments.

As part of Bill 5: the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2020, Comprehensive Institutional Plans are being replaced with three-year Investment Management Agreements and there are now reduced processes by allowing institutions to sell or lease land and borrow money with approval through a Ministerial Order instead of an Order in Council. Other red tape reduction achievements include reducing restrictions on post-secondary institutions to set tuition and other fees, streamlining the Alberta Transfer and Pathways processes, consolidating multiple scholarships into more efficient processes and updating forms to use an E-consent process.

Through these red tape reductions, institutions have greater autonomy to set tuition and fees consistent with market forces and diversify their revenue streams; there are less reporting requirements; and the province and institutions can together set goals and priorities centered around ensuring students complete their post-secondary education with skill for the current and future labour market. In addition, through the Alberta 2030: Transforming Post-Secondary Education initiative, government will ensure the adult learning system is affordable, accessible and reflective of our economy's future needs.

Question 12

Mr. Gotfried: Lastly, if we have time, page 79 of the annual report has a statement of revenue and expenses. Other revenue was budgeted for approximately \$81 million, and the actual was \$164 million. Can the department explain this large difference?

Response:

The variance is due to higher than expected endowment contributions.

Question 13

Mr. Gotfried: With respect to donations, grants, and contributions, on page 79 they were budgeted for \$336 million and were \$411 million for the fiscal year. How did the department achieve this result?

Response:

There was higher than expected revenue recognized from externally restricted projects and an unexpected individual donation of land in the year.