



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**Standing Committee**  
**on**  
**Public Accounts**

*Chairperson*  
*Mr. Josh Guenter*  
*Constituency of Borderland*



Vol. LXXIX No. 4 - 7 p.m., Thursday, May 8, 2025

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
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KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
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LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
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LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
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<i>Vacant</i>	Spruce Woods	

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA  
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**Thursday, May 8, 2025**

**TIME** – 7 p.m.

**LOCATION** – Winnipeg, Manitoba

**CHAIRPERSON** – Mr. Josh Guenter (*Borderland*)

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON** – MLA Jim Maloway (*Elmwood*)

**ATTENDANCE** – 10      **QUORUM** – 6

*Members of the committee present:*

*Mr. Brar, MLAs Compton, Dela Cruz, Devgan,  
Messrs. Ewasko, Guenter, MLAs Lamoureux,  
Maloway, Mr. Oxenham, Mrs. Stone*

**APPEARING:**

*Tyson Shtykalo, Auditor General of Manitoba*

**WITNESSES:**

*Jan Forster, Deputy Minister of Advanced  
Education and Training*

*Colleen Kachulak, Assistant Deputy Minister,  
Advanced Education and Training*

**MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:**

*Auditor General's Report – Oversight of Post-  
Secondary Institutions, dated October 2020*

*Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously  
Issued Recommendations, dated March 2023*

*Oversight of Post-Secondary Institutions*

*Auditor General's Report – Follow Up of Previously  
Issued Recommendations, dated February 2025*

*Oversight of Post-Secondary Institutions*

\* \* \*

**The Chairperson:** Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Public Accounts please come to order.

Before we begin with our business today, I would like to inform the committee that a resignation letter from MLA Nesbitt as a member of this committee was

received. MLA Ewasko is now the replacement PAC member for the remainder of this Legislature.

This meeting has been called to consider the following reports: the Auditor General's Report–Oversight of Post-Secondary Institutions, dated October 2020; the Auditor General's Report–Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated March 2023, Oversight of Post-Secondary Institutions; and the Auditor General's Report–Follow Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated February 2025, Oversight of Post-Secondary Institutions.

Are there any suggestions from the committee as to how long we should sit this afternoon—or this evening?

**MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I suggest we meet for an hour and then—

**The Chairperson:** It's been suggested that we meet for an hour and then revisit. Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

In what order does the committee wish to consider the reports? Is there—should we consider—does the committee agree to consider them all together? [*Agreed*]

At this time, I will ask the committee if there is leave for all witnesses in attendance to speak and answer questions on the record if desired. Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Leave has been granted.

I would also like to remind everyone that questions and comments must be put through the Chair using third person, as opposed to directly to members and witnesses.

Before we proceed further, I'd like to inform all in attendance of the process that is undertaken with regard to outstanding questions. At the end of every meeting, the research clerk reviews the Hansard for any outstanding questions that witness—that the witness commits to provide an answer to and will draft a questions-pending-response document to send to the deputy minister. Upon receipt of the answers to those questions, the research clerk then forwards the responses to every PAC member and to every other member recorded as attending that meeting.

Does the Auditor General wish to make an opening statement?

**Mr. Tyson Shtykalo (Auditor General):** First, I'd like to introduce staff that I have with me today. I'm joined by Maria Capozzi, who is the engagement leader on the report under consideration today.

Mr. Chair, post-secondary education is an important contributor to Manitoba's success and is delivered through a wide variety of programming, both in the public and private institutions throughout the province.

Our report on the oversight of post-secondary institutions is focused on the oversight of the seven public post-secondary institutions that receive direct government funding. These institutions form part of the government reporting entity and their financial statements are incorporated into the public accounts. This includes three universities, two colleges and two university college hybrid institutions.

The two chapters in this report bring together several audits we conducted over a four-year period. In order to provide a comprehensive review of the oversight of the seven public post-secondary institutions, chapter 1 provides our findings on the government's oversight of the institutions and chapter 2 examines the governance oversight provided by the governing boards at each institution.

An effective accountability framework keeps post-secondary institutions accountable to the government while empowering each institution to achieve its unique mandates and strategic priorities within the government's overall objectives for the post-education education system.

Such accountability relationship is best achieved through an open, collaborative relationship based on trust and mutual respect. Our audit concluded that an appropriate accountability framework was not in place for departmental oversight of post-secondary institutions.

Chapter 1 includes 14 recommendations to address the audit's major findings. We found that roles and responsibilities are not defined or documented, that strategic objectives and priority outcomes for post-secondary education system as a whole are not defined or communicated, that monitoring of institutional operations and performance is weak, that the department provides limited reporting on system-wide performance and that communication processes to build strong, mutually respectful relationships to—require improvement.

Mr. Chair, we also expect the governing boards to ensure rigorous oversight of the financial and operational performance of their post-secondary

institutions and to implement robust accountability practices with their—with respect to their presidents.

Our governance review, along with an audit of the president's expenses and compliance reviews of president's appointment agreements, determined that there is a need to modernize and strengthen key governance practices at these institutions. This would ensure oversight functions are being appropriately fulfilled, especially with respect to oversight of the president.

It's important to note that our review of institutional governance practices related solely to the financial operational and management oversight provided by the governing boards of each institution. Universities operate under a bicameral governing structure where authority for academic matters rests with the university senate, while authority for financial, operational and administrative matters rests with the governing board. As such, our review did not include any academic-related matters, quality of education issues or academic oversight practices of any university senate.

Chapter 2 includes eight recommendations to address the governance reviews' major findings. We found that board member appointments by government were not timely. There is a need to review legislative provisions regarding appointments.

We found that stronger governance practices are needed to enhance board oversight. We found that accountability reporting by institution requires significant improvement. We found that boards must ensure compliance with president's appointment agreements and that board oversight of president's expenses needs improvement.

As a result of our audit findings, we reviewed how Manitoba and other provincial jurisdictions support and provide guidance to board-governed organizations outside of the post-secondary education system. We found that Manitoba lacks central support and guidance on matters that are common to all boards. This means that each department is required to develop its own processes.

\* (19:10)

Some departments are better resourced to provide such support and focus on governance matters; but understandably this may be more difficult for smaller departments with more limited capacity to devote staff resources to such endeavours.

Two of our recommendations in our report are directed at the province to provide greater central support and guidance for board-governed organizations; building mutually respectful relationships and improving communication between government-governing boards and executive management is not just pertinent to the post-secondary education system.

Mr. Chair, our second and final follow-up on the status and recommendations for this audit was issued in March of 2025. Three of the recommendations were reported by management as being implemented or resolved as at September 30, 2024.

Before I conclude, I'd like to acknowledge the co-operation and assistance of the department throughout this audit. I also appreciate the co-operation and assistance of all seven public institutions and the time spent by many board chairs and board members who we interviewed.

Further, I'd like to extend my thanks to my staff for their diligence and hard work in preparing this report, and I look forward to the discussion today.

**The Chairperson:** I thank the Auditor General for his opening comments.

Does the deputy minister of Advanced Education and Training wish to make an opening statement and would she please introduce her staff joining her here today?

**Ms. Jan Forster (Deputy Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** Good evening, I'm Jan Forster, the deputy minister for Advanced Education and Training, and I have with me Colleen Kachulak, who is the assistant deputy minister responsible for Advanced Education.

We're pleased to be here and talk to you tonight about something that we talk about an awful lot in our department and a really important report that we're making good headway on.

You know, the Auditor General has spoken about the themes that we'll talk about tonight in the report, and they are incredibly important. You know, in Manitoba we have a system where our public post-secondary institutions receive almost \$1 billion in public funds, so it's really important that we have good processes in place to make sure that they're well-governed and that the boards are able to make sure that these institutions run properly.

We also want to make sure that these are well-managed organizations where students can get

excellent higher education and certainly, you know, have a path forward into our labour market.

The O-A-D report, I would say, are—I speak about daily, as do my staff and speak about pretty much every time we meet with any of our public colleges and universities. It's a report that I thank the OAG for doing. It's really helped us further an important journey and I'm excited to talk to you about it tonight, especially the role of boards and the modernization that was needed and we're making good progress on.

The report was received in 2020 and, as people around the table would likely know, post-secondary education was a really challenging thing in COVID. And so we did make progress on the report but, you know, our progress has picked up in the past year and a bit because we've gotten through the pandemic and we're now able to devote more time to it.

So we've really renewed our commitment to the recommendations and moving them forward. And I note that while, technically, as of September of 2024, we had completed three; and that doesn't sound like a lot. I would say now we've completed a lot more and at least on the vast majority, we're close to crossing the finish line on them. So there's really good progress being made.

We still have more to do but some of them require things like legislation and—but lots of good ground-work is being done.

The recommendations really weigh into what is a very complex environment. Our post-secondary institutions, especially the universities, are governed by legislation that really emphasizes that they are independent, autonomous institutions and yet we also know they receive a lot of public dollars. And we also have to make sure that our students are receiving high-quality education.

So it's a nuanced thing, in terms of working to be sure that the oversight is appropriate; so respecting autonomy but also having accountability for the public. But it is a complex arena.

We've spent a lot of time rebuilding—or strengthening our relationships with post-secondaries in the past couple of years, really emphasizing that it's in all our interests to move forward on the OAG recommendations and have well-run organizations that the public can have confidence in, and really doing it—going at each recommendation in a spirit of collaboration and trust and, you know, focusing on the system as a whole.

So there's been quite a culture shift. We're really focusing on engagement and, actually, for a number of their recommendations that we'll talk about, legislative change really is required.

So we've taken a very robust engagement approach—or, I think the largest engagement that I've been a part of in my 28 years in the Province. We've met with about 200 individuals, and we've had written responses received; we've had over 30 sessions with different stakeholder groups.

So just to give you a sample, we've spent a lot of time with the presidents of these institutions: board chairs, secretaries, faculty associations, students' associations, Indigenous representation at these institutions as well as elders and, you know, broader stakeholder groups as well, really talking about the recommendations and what we would propose in potential legislation and receive people's feedback.

So we're spending a lot of time listening, and I think you can imagine that we hear different and diverse things from students' associations versus faculty associations and presidents and board secretaries. But I think that there's a common ground there that everyone wants accountability and well-run organizations, and they also want independence and academic freedom. And I think that having confidence that boards, for instance, are doing their jobs allows the Province to have that confidence and not have to overstep or be perceived to overstep. So it can also promote academic freedom and independence.

Stakeholders have been really appreciative that we've taken the time to really engage with them, and I—you know, legislation is at the leisure of the government. However, I can say that we've making really good progress on developing proposed options for government consideration. The legislation is also nuanced because we need to make sure that we—and I believe this is also reflected in the spirit of the report as well—is that we need to appreciate that each of our institutions is unique, and a cookie-cutter one-size-fits-all for things like board size and composition and those kinds of things isn't going to work. But we can have greater alignment and co-ordination.

We really want to modernize the governance at these boards. We've spent a lot of time looking at what other jurisdictions are doing, and we really thank the OAG and the team for helping us to understand some of those best practices. And I know I've spoken with other colleagues in other departments as well, as well as clerks, about how the recommendations in this report not only can help the post-secondary sector but

other sectors, as well, in terms of how boards are governed. A lot of it has to do with transparency and accountability and reporting to Manitobans.

And so I think that, you know, we have confidence that the system is well run. I think we're making very good progress on the recommendations. Some of the items require a little more—we're putting a little more formality to them so that they'll withstand changes in public servants and those kinds of things and make sure that we're really institutionalizing these changes.

But we feel really good about it, and we'll continue to work in collaboration with the OAG and the colleges and universities.

So, thank you.

**The Chairperson:** All right. Thank the—I thank the deputy minister for your opening comments.

The floor is now open for questions.

**MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson):** Thank you to folks from the department for coming down and for tracking the progress on this since the initial report was released. I can certainly appreciate the complexities of post-secondary governance.

\* (19:20)

I think around the time that this report was actually put out, I was leading the—or the students union at the University of Manitoba and on the board of governors there as well. So when it comes to academic freedom and accountability and desired metrics and so forth, I know members of the PAC, or Public Accounts committee, as well, can really relate to a lot of what may be delayed progress in some of these key recommendations.

And so you alluded to some legislation that is needed in order to progress across the finish line on a number of these items. I'm wondering if you could elaborate on some examples of legislation that would be beneficial. *[interjection]*

**The Chairperson:** The Auditor General—or, sorry, the deputy minister.

**Ms. Forster:** Sorry. We've spent a lot of time there. I believe there's about five recommendations that we anticipate will be completed through legislation. A lot of it has to do with overall system co-ordination, enhanced transparency and consistency in reporting and governance and greater alignment.

So things like board size, we have really diverse sizes of boards without, perhaps, rhyme or reason, historically. And so we're looking at having a sort of a continuum of board sizes relative to the size of the organization, but some relative consistency so that larger universities would have a relatively similar size board.

We're looking at consistency around term lengths, remuneration for board members, looking at diversity, equity and inclusion and accessibility of the board members and provisions regarding conflict of interest and president oversight. So really being prescriptive around the board's role in terms of managing the performance of presidents and the financial spending of the presidents' offices.

We're also looking at—you know, I think the Office of the Auditor General made a good point that we don't need to be prescriptive in legislation around board committees, and we do in some situations now, and so having—removing that from legislation and enabling the boards to decide what committees they think are appropriate.

We're also looking at having sort of a floor of Indigenous representation on the board so that, you know, there can be more folks, but really looking at representing the people in Manitoba on—and reflecting their needs on the board in the spirit of reconciliation and moving forward the truth and reconciliation recommendations.

So, you know, we're also looking at reporting, making sure that the OAG report talks about transparency and ensuring that each institution has a sort of a consistent set of things that they report on to the public so that someone could look at each institution's annual report and see some alignment and be able to compare between and across them.

I think those are the bulk of the things that we're looking at covering with legislation.

**The Chairperson:** Yes, just a general reminder to put your questions and answers through the Chair.

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** Thank you to the deputy minister and the assistant deputy minister for being here today. I think you've got a little bit of University of Manitoba representation on PAC today, and it's good to be on this side.

First, I want to start by actually co-signing and maybe supporting your statement earlier about that collaborative work that you're undertaking with the PSIs, because I've seen it first-hand, and I know a lot

of the post-secondary presidents and heads have been really appreciative of that.

Because—I said this earlier in our pre-meeting—but there's not a lack of want on the part of the post-secondaries to be closely aligned with the department. I think the question and the detail always comes down to: What are we measuring right now? What exactly are we trying to do and where are we trying to head?

So it's a work in progress, right? And I think you made another important point which is each one of these PSIs are unique in their own way, right? A university of Manitoba and a UCN, two very different things. There are similarities that I think that we can create between all of them, but there are certain characteristics that I think we have to be mindful of between the three of them. But I think, overall, the goal of all of them is to be aligned with what we called—was the labour market strategy, and be aligned in that.

So my question for you, actually, is a general question. I know that you're in communication regularly with the post-secondaries, and we've just touched a little bit on that.

Are you still doing monthly meetings with the heads? And if so, with regards to some of the recommendations, and recognizing that these recommendations are a snapshot in time a little ways ago and things change pretty drastically—but what is your current assessment as of—what is it, May?—May, 2025, of the relationship and the progress towards improving so-called oversight.

**The Chairperson:** Yes, just a reminder: we can't essentially say you, I think, is what we're getting at here.

**Ms. Forster:** I thank the member for the question.

We've invested a lot of time in meetings with each of our public post-secondaries. And I can note earlier, the Auditor General noted the institutions that we count as our wonderful public post-secondaries in Manitoba, since the time of the report, we've also moved the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology into a post-secondary, officially—a public post-secondary. So we also apply the spirit and the intent of the OAG report to MITT as well.

We meet very frequently with our post-secondaries and have established a really good, open dialogue. I feel very comfortable that we have great relationships. I do meet monthly with the presidents, and, actually,

it winds up being more than monthly because we have regular meetings but also ad-hoc as they come up.

The minister—this was a recommendation of the OAG, but we've formalized the minister having meetings with the board chairs twice a year. It's in the calendar and formalized, and that's been really helpful. It also helps us to really establish the board in their role and reinforce the board's important role.

We have—in Manitoba, because of our size, our institutions are able to work quite well together as a system, and there was an announcement today by Red River and U of M about a pathway, but—for engineering from Red River to the University of Manitoba, which I think is excellent, and it's the kind of thing we're trying to reinforce with our post-secondaries. One of the strategic priorities is a real systems approach to look at students and their pathways.

So the reason I mention this is the presidents have actually a table that they meet at, I believe monthly, and the minister, and sometimes myself, you know, without the minister, regularly attend those meetings to talk about specific strategic priorities for the sector. And that really helps as well.

We have the vice-president academic table, and our assistant deputy minister and leadership team meet monthly with them. And we also established a table with the board secretaries, following the OAG report, that's been really valuable as well. So we're meeting quarterly with the board secretaries.

So we're doing a lot of meeting, but I actually think it's really helping, and it is valuable in terms of time, and it helps us to get in front of any issues and have positive outcomes for Manitoba. Yes.

We've meet also with vice presidents, Indigenous and all of those kinds of things. But there's really good communication and respect, and I think it's—you know, us investing the time is really paying off in terms of having the system all rowing in the same direction.

Thank you.

**MLA Maloway:** Well, I have to say I'm very impressed with what you are trying to get accomplished there, because on the surface of it, it looked like we had a report that was 10 years old and three recommendations were being done. So I got to—I've changed my mind based on what you've told us right now, and I hope you're a hundred per cent correct on all of this.

\* (19:30)

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** So I'd like to ask the department, through you, of the recommendations, we have one of the follow-ups that the office of the Auditor General had mentioned how there was three complete, and now the department has said—I think I'm saying that properly—has said that they're moving along quite well in regards to progress on many, and they're only a short—not short. I mean, sometimes it takes a little bit longer to have legislation changes, to get a few others over the finish line.

So I'd like to know, out of the 22 recommendations—the three we know are already complete—which ones are—if they're able to tell us today which ones are sort of at which stages—75 per cent, 80 per cent?—along those lines.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Ms. Forster:** Thanks to the member for the question.

I—if it—if the—it makes sense, I can just touch quickly on each of them and give you a Coles Notes progress report, if it's helpful.

The first recommendation focuses on creating a roles and responsibilities document. We have a draft, and we've engaged our post-secondaries on the draft. So I would say we're 80 per cent of the way there. But I will say, I believe we have a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities, and taking the time to meet with board chairs regularly has helped with that.

The second recommendation focuses on having a—developing and documenting strategic objectives and desired priority outcomes for the system. And I would say that we have been working towards some formal processes in that regard, and those are close to being across the finish line.

But I will also say that we have things like the—we have—because we're at the presidents' table frequently, we talk about the system's—the minister's priorities for the system. And we also build them into our annual budget letter. So they're not a—they're essentially developed collaboratively with the presidents at the presidents' table, and they're reinforced in the budget letter.

So I would say things like increasing the participation rates of Manitobans attending post-secondary education—just for interest, there's evidence in the province—the data showing that, you know, over the next five years, we're going to need—like, jobs in Manitoba are going to need—about 70 per cent of the jobs require some post-secondary education. It might be in the trades; it might be otherwise. And we are not



close to that. So we've been talking about participation rates and tracking them.

We have also—in terms of strategic objectives for the system, we continue to focus on systemwide thinking and partnerships, things like the Red River, U of M engineering announcement today, focusing on student needs and helping them to navigate our systems because right now it's very difficult. We know that some students—when I started in post-secondary quite a long time ago, myself and my colleagues tended to start a program and take a linear approach and finish them and then try to get into that career. The evidence now shows that young people tend to move around and switch course a few times. And so we need to make that easier for them and things like credit transfers and navigation to help people that aren't traditionally, you know, feeling comfortable in post-secondaries, so that they can succeed.

We also underscore, in terms of strategic objectives, responsible management in this evolving landscape, and there's been a lot happen in the past couple of years. Particularly, we've been really focused on international students since a year ago, January, the federal government really dramatically changed that landscape.

We talk about efficient and effective financial management for sustainability and accessible, affordable, high-quality post-secondary education.

So those are the big strategic objectives that we've talked about in collaboration with our presidents and reinforce in our annual budget letters.

So the third recommendation talks about, in conjunction with the post-secondary institutions, reviewing and updating as needed each institution's mandate under the legislation and coming up with agreed-upon mandate letters. We are working on formalizing those; however, the budget letters, I think, do get at somewhat this, but we do need to now finalize them in mandate letters, and those—we are working on drafts and the OAG recommended that we develop those collaboratively with our institutions and we are doing that.

The sector-wide strategic objectives is referenced in No. 4, an institutional—a developing institutional reporting mechanism. And showing how—trying to get too quick here—showing how those strategic plans align with those at each of the institutions. And there is work going on on this as well, in terms of institutional reporting.

One of the things I should mention that touches on a number of the recommendations is data, and we

do need to further develop our data capacity to be able to properly identify how we're doing on important metrics. I can—I'm excited to say that we actually have been working for the past couple of years on a product with an external vendor to have a student level data system.

So, historically, it's a bit ironic, but Manitoba's institutions would give their data on student outcomes to Statistics Canada, and then we would see the package from Statistics Canada and it's a little bit backwards, and Manitoba needs that data.

And so—and I think it's in everybody's interest to have better data so we can see how our students are doing and where the gaps are and where the opportunities are. So I'm excited that, in the next coming couple of months, hopefully we'll have this product. So we've been working hard with the post secondaries in getting their data into this system.

Another piece—pardon me—that we've been engaged in on this is working with the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy. Manitoba has a really robust data collection centre that allows us to look, while keeping people's data private, at how people are doing in a number of systems. So we'll be able to see, you know, is it being—are we helping individuals that haven't—perhaps adult learners welcomed into post-secondary, are they able to reduce their reliance on income assistance. Those kinds of things, but really also hoping to then connect data to federal income tax data—I'm diving a bit deep on this one, but it'll be able to tell us if we're—if our folks are meeting labour market needs and if they're—if post-secondary is hitting the mark in terms of what our strategic goals are for the province.

So data gets at a number of these pieces in terms of metrics and performance outcomes, and I'm really looking forward to having the system in place so that we can then sit down with the presidents' table and identify how we're going to report on them publicly.

The recommendation No. 5 talks about establishing results-based performance metrics and monitoring financial and operational performance of institutions. So we are working on a number of processes internally in terms of the finances, but the student level data system is really going to be able to have us complete this, and we should be there soon.

Number 6 talks about monitoring processes that are focused on results-based performance metrics for the institutions and monitoring progress towards achieving overall strategic priorities and system-wide

outcomes. And the student level data system will help us with that as well.

Number 7 talks about having the department develop a process to obtain assurance from institutions that they are compliant with all applicable legislation. So we've looked at—we've done a scan of all of the applicable legislation and developed a bit of a risk matrix to determine, you know, which are the highest priority that we want to have in assurance that the institutions are following.

I'll give you an example: the sexual violence prevention legislation that was rolled out a few years ago. We've formalized some processes of engaging with the institutions to make sure that they're complying. So I would say that, you know, we could probably document how we're doing this a little more formally to get the checkmark, but I believe we're there on that one.

\* (19:40)

Number 8 talks about developing a process to evaluate and assess performance of the post-secondary education system as a whole. And that again is where, I think, our student-level data system is going to be important to know.

And then, you know, our data folks are looking at other Stats Canada data and identifying who could be participating in our education system and who are we missing by virtue of the student-level data. And then it recommends that we have system-wide performance metrics, and we have started to identify those in our recent Supplement to the Estimates of Expenditure and annual report. But we're also going to be really refining those, I think, and adding more once we have, not only the student-level data system but the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy interlinkages.

Number 9 talks about reporting on performance and results of the system overall in our annual report, and I think we've made progress on that in the last annual report as well. So we've really—the Province as a whole has refined the reporting and I believe that captures a lot of what's there. And once we get the further data, I think we'll be able to add more metrics into that annual report.

Number 10 talks about improving communication processes at all levels; the board chairs and having, at minimum, an annual meeting with the board chair and president. And I would say this is done now. We've formalized that process and it's been really beneficial. And also, this recommendation talks about ensuring a

strong, mutually respectful relationship and having processes and plans—

**The Chairperson:** The minister's—deputy minister's time is expired.

Is there leave to allow her to finish her answer?  
[Agreed]

All right.

**Ms. Forster:** This—the OAG recommendation talks about having those communication channels in place so that we can keep informed of emerging issues. And I would say that the regular cadence of meetings that we have now is enabling us to have, you know, no surprises in our system and work closely and collaboratively. I listed off earlier all of the meetings that we're having, but it is pretty robust, so I think that one is done.

And we also have a bit of a no-wrong-doors approach, so that if an institution reaches out to a policy analyst, for instance, they escalate it up so that there's awareness at my level as well. And institutions are able to contact the minister or myself, or the assistant deputy minister, and we're keeping better processes internally in terms of communication so that we're on top of things.

Number 11—I can try and speed it up—talks about establishing protocols to address significant issues and concerns. And I think this is where we need to formalize those protocols, but part of it is a little bit more. But I think the increased communication is really helping us to be able to address issues when they come up.

I'm also finding, and I think that the members can appreciate, that it's hard to anticipate what kinds of issues emerge. They're all unique and have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, but I think that we can do a little bit more work around formalizing the types of issues and giving our staff direction on how we would deal with different types of things.

So we—I would say maybe 50 per cent on that one—but I don't think it's going to take much to get across the finish line.

Number 12 talks about—okay, No. 12 is complete and I can skip that one, if it's helpful.

Number 13 is about ensuring that the—having the minister ensure information provided to the LG-in-C appointment process is fulsome and up-to-date, and having a full list of all institution board members and their skill sets.

So—haven't talked about this much yet, but we've really formalized following the report processes with our ABCs. It's a, you know, there's a lot that is political, but there's a lot the department can do in terms of making sure that we're organized and focused and the ABC team has the best information to be able to make decisions.

So we've—we are now maintaining a complete list of the board membership, not just the LG-in-C appointments and we are working with the institutions to identify the skill sets and skills matrices on each board so that when new appointments are being considered, there's better information being provided to ABCs on where the opportunities and needs are. So I think we're pretty close to done on this one.

Number 14 talks about providing central guidance and support for governance in accountability matters that are common to public sector board entities and in particular, I think, post-secondary entities. And so we've started developing a—we, first of all we have a—we've really made sure there's formality and rigour around the board training, but we're also developing, and just starting to work on this, with the board secretaries—a supplementary training package.

Because it is unique. Like, in the bicameral system, for instance, there's some unique things about board governance in this world. So we're developing a training plan on that.

Number 15 talks about ensuring LG-in-C appointments are done in a timely manner, and legislative inconsistencies regarding expired terms should be reviewed. And so we are looking at the legislative items and having a little more standardization, but we're also, because the department is—we've actually got a dedicated individual tracking all the board stuff, so we're able to identify and flag, you know, when there's going to be needing to be appointments made, and we're actually, on my weekly minister—deputy minister agenda, the ABC appointment timelines is now formalized there as well.

Recommend—No. 16 that the minister, in consultation with the institutions review the legislative inconsistencies about member appointments, et cetera, such as, you know, legislation size. Certainly, there's been a tremendous amount of engagement on that one, and I believe we're pretty close once the government has the opportunity to consider the—moving forward with the legislation.

Number 17—I'm getting through here—is about ensuring that the LG-in-C appointments are used for

external board members and that they bring a diverse mix of skill sets. The legislative proposal that we are moving forward with does include that.

Recommend that the department obtain action plans from institutions and follow up on actions—okay, this one's complete, sorry—No. 18.

Number 19 is recommending that the minister and department work in consultation with the institutions to review legislative inconsistencies about board committees and whether they need to exist, and the legislative package that we're going to be proposing does address that.

Number 20 is about recommend the department provide guidance and standard minimum expectations for annual reports. This is one of the things we engaged heavily with them on, and are looking at coming up with a minimum set of requirements. I think we're—we've started documenting them already in partnership with the institutions.

And No. 21 talks about providing guidance to assist all post sector—public sector governing boards responsible for negotiating executive compensation. This one is really a—one that's the responsibility of the clerk of the Executive Council and I—there are discussions happening with the clerk and the Public Service Commission on this, and there was also a recent Public Sector Executive Compensation Act that does complete the first part of the recommendation.

And then they further recommend that the minister work in consultation with the institutions to develop guidelines reflecting an appropriate executive compensation framework for the sector. This is interesting, and it is challenging, because we do have to respect institutional autonomy, too, so it's a bit of a fine dance. And institutions also find that they need to be able to attract talented folks to run their organizations and be somewhat competitive with other provinces and territories. But I know there is work under way with the clerk and the commissioner.

And No. 22 is complete. So I think that is a high-level overview of the list.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** I thank the deputy minister.

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** I feel like I have 27 questions. How many I can ask, I don't know. But first of all I want to say thank you to the AG department for bringing this document forward. It's a very important subject, and post-secondary education as a

whole is very important, not just for our province but for our society as a whole.

\* (19:50)

I was looking at the recommendations and I was listening to the responses by the deputy minister. I want to say thanks to the leadership in the department and the whole team for handling such a diverse range of institutions. And when I look at intra-institutional diversity, that's even more; from a trades program in plumbing to somebody who is developing canola ratings. Like, not comparable, right?

So when we talk about reporting and assessment and performance indicators, like how do you, like, how do we develop a criteria to monitor what we want to monitor? Because these recommendations are not simple, that you check the box; this is done. For example, I see here under what we found it says, weak monitoring and performance. How do we improve that, and how do we improve that across the institutes, starting from MITT to U of M? Like, if I can get some insight into it.

Thank you.

**Ms. Forster:** Thank you for the question, and it is a complex system. I'll start by saying that we have somewhat slightly different parameters for our college sector versus the university sector, which the university legislative framework and tradition is much more about academic freedom. And so we tend to not—we respect their independence in terms of, you know, the types of programs that they want to deliver. We do work collaboratively to decide and approve programs, but there's a real respect for academic freedom.

In terms of the colleges, we work a little more closely to say, you know, we need to work together to build up more trades training and more health-care aide training, those kinds of things. So it's a little more of a direct relationship.

But we do work with them and agree that there needs to be system-wide metrics, so, you know, how many of their students are completing, or are they—how many students or our domestic population is signing up for courses and then also how many are completing.

So there's some system-wide metrics, but then we also have—you know, each institution is doing their own individual metrics so on achievement. But we need to—once we get the student-level data system in place I think we'll be able to really refine our metrics here and looking at, you know, where are the

opportunities in our labour market, for instance, that we're falling short on and how can we work together as a system to strengthen them. And also where are we—you know, maybe how can we help some students better connect to further training and employment when they're not succeeding.

So it's a complex landscape and it—I think that we're fortunate to be the size that we are in Manitoba and we can work with each individual institution on their unique sort of needs and programs.

**Mr. Brar:** A follow-up: when we talk about academic freedom it's understandable that we cannot interfere too much or we cannot micromanage the scientists. They know way more than the department does: where to get funding from in addition to the provincial funding, and what are the research priorities; that's fine. We let them do their work, but to some extent, because the province is providing funding so they're accountable to the province. So that's balance between academic freedom and accountability.

On another note, there are private PSIs in the province. How much control this legislation has over those institutions when they decide which courses to offer, what's the content? I'm referring to so many international students choosing Manitoba for their studies.

So is it based upon the labour needs assessment, or does the Province at all interfere or suggest or advises something when they make those decisions? And is there a scope of employment after that? Because there is a scope of exploitation of those young minds, and make it a kind of, you know, more commercial thing.

So how much control we, as a Province, and the legislation, has over those private PSIs?

**Ms. Forster:** It adds to the complexity of our post-secondary landscape and it's important to think about the whole system.

We—I guess there's sort of two areas that I think are at play here: one is about, like—we have private religious colleges and universities in Manitoba and then we also have private vocational institutions, and maybe I'll talk about those—that we call them PVIs—first.

And Manitoba has very strong legislation governing those—I think it was 2022 that really strong legislation came into place that ensures that students are not taken advantage of. And so they—the intent really is that, you know, there has to be a lot of transparency for students in terms of all the fees and costs and also the labour

market outcomes for these jobs that people will get in the PVIs.

And so we've really worked hard at rolling out and implementing that legislation with our PVIs, and we have high standards for those PVIs in Manitoba, and, you know, they need to follow the regulatory requirements to operate in Manitoba.

So we do oversee those programs, and the legislation really ensures that there's a lot more transparency there. And also mechanisms for students, if they feel that they were taken advantage of, and those kinds of things.

In terms of the private religious institutions, we don't have any say over the programs they provide; they have complete autonomy to deliver those programs. The role that we have there is, really, around international students and they need to meet the requirements of our international education legislation. And we do work with them to provide them with the attestation letters.

There's—the international education system has been changed completely over the past year and a half, and it's continuing to change all the time, and it—and we're trying to work closely with all of our public institutions and the private religious institutions to make sure that we try to have the best possible outcomes for Manitoba here, but it is rapidly changing.

I hope that answers the question.

**The Chairperson:** All right. A couple of minutes until we reach our hour.

Is it the will of the committee to extend for half an hour?

**An Honourable Member:** Unless the questions run out before.

**The Chairperson:** Right. Yes, we can always rise earlier or go later.

**Mr. Brar:** Can I have a quick follow-up? After we are decided on the time.

**The Chairperson:** Oh, for sure, absolutely. Yes.

*[Agreed]* So if it's agreed, then we'll sit for another half hour.

**Mr. Brar:** A quick follow-up. There was a mention of board appointments and criteria. I understand that there are terms for appointees, and in certain cases those appointees can continue serving a few months after the term has expired.

So, who writes those regulations? Who develops that criteria? Is it in between that particular institution and the department across, or is it province-wide same? How does it weigh and how can we make things better there? Because post-secondary institutions—one mistake made, or one wrong choice made today, we could be paying for it, paying the price for it for next four decades.

So it's that important. That's how I look at it. So, like, what's the scene there? Like, who decides and what's the criteria? And what is the department doing to make it better after these recommendations?

**Ms. Forster:** That's a really good question, and that was something that the Auditor General found, is that there's inconsistencies in the—like, there's a piece of legislation for each of our post secondaries, and they all have slightly different parameters.

And so one of the things that we're going to be bringing forward in a proposed bill for consideration by government will have some consistency. So it will be legislated, what the term limits are and how—what happens when someone's term expires. So there'll be some consistency.

\* (20:00)

There might be some unique things where it's not quite the same in each. I know that Université de Saint-Boniface has some practices that are slightly different than others, but they work very well for them, so we didn't want to have a one-size-fits-all approach. But generally speaking, there'll be consistency in terms of the legislative base for how those term appointments work.

And then our staff now have formal processes for making sure that we're tracking whose term is going to be coming up for expiry, and we're looking at the skills matrices that are needed in the—on that board and then bringing forward to the ABC office, you know, a bit of a system so that they know that they need to make sure that they're timely in their responses, as well, and finding appropriate board appointments that meet those needs.

**MLA Devgan:** I just want to talk a little bit about, very quickly, student-level data, because that is critical. That is everything right now, because when we're talking about measuring outcomes, that is how you measure outcomes. This is what PSIs have been asking for as well. But not only that, it allows governments to track labour market alignment.

So as far as the deputy minister can, can they please elaborate a little bit more on what this may look like coming down the road and where that begins. Does that begin in high school? And how far down the road can it go? And just to add a little bit to that, is there also an income tax CRA component to that?

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** The deputy minister.

**Floor Comment:** Assistant deputy minister.

**The Chairperson:** The assistant deputy minister.

**Ms. Colleen Kachulak (Assistant Deputy Minister, Advanced Education and Training):** No, it's—I think this is one of the most, sort of, exciting things that we've been working on in the last little while.

So currently, the department receives information from institutions in aggregate form, so we sort of see it on a program level; we don't really get a good sense of what any one individual is doing as they progress through the system. So if somebody starts at Brandon University, we have no idea if they complete at Brandon or if they complete at the University of Winnipeg. And there's a lot of really critical information that we can learn about a student's journey through post-secondary.

So what we will begin to have is sort of these by-individual annual records of student progress and student participation within the system. And so that will be one piece where we'll be able to start, sort of, I'm going to say querying the system in ways that we probably historically haven't been able to, and answer questions that we haven't necessarily been able to answer. So that will be sort of the first key step.

There isn't right now sort of a built-in piece around income tax data, which is one of those things where we do want to make a little bit better linkages to, to start to give a sense, also, to students about, if I go into this program, what is a likely, sort of, outcome in terms of labour market?

So that will be some piece that we are going to have to figure out. That's always a little bit trickier with Canada Revenue Agency involved, but, you know, we're working on ways to contemplate that.

And I think that the other big piece that we will be able to do—and what this system does is that it actually creates consistent data between institutions. So, fundamentally, as we go through this system, we all have institutions talking about an FTE in the same way, so like a student. And I can assure you that that

took weeks to unpackage with each institution because nobody reported on it the same way.

So now when we talk about system data, we're going to be able to at least talk about it on a consistent basis, and we're talking about an apples-to-apples comparison rather than some sort of mix of apples and oranges. So I think that's really going to fundamentally even just change what we report and what we can say to the outcomes of the system.

**The Chairperson:** MLA—sorry. MLA Devgan, did you have a follow-up?

**MLA Devgan:** I was just going to ask if the AG has a quick follow-up to that.

**The Chairperson:** Sure. *[interjection]* Well, that's okay. We have time; that's no problem.

**MLA Devgan:** Yes, I'd love to hear the Auditor General's feedback on that, specifically.

**Mr. Shtykalo:** Yes, I'm—I'd just like to comment on that. It's very good to hear that, making such good progress. I know this is something that has been in the works for a long, long time, and it sounds like it's really starting to show the fruits of the labour, so, yes.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** I thank the deputy minister for going through the recommendations and identifying the progress that has been made.

I just wanted to circle back to one of the comments you had made regarding the implementation of processes for financial outcomes. So, I'm just curious how greater oversight of financial outcomes and monitoring with PCIs could better prevent situations that arise, like what happened a few years ago with the dean of Robson Hall allegedly misusing and misappropriating funds, and how that monitoring could better prevent that in the future with that greater oversight of financials.

**Ms. Forster:** Yes. One of the meetings that I didn't mention in the list that we're routinely doing now is that our EFO, the executive financial officer, is meeting quarterly with the vice-presidents of finance and admin at each institution and going over their quarterly reports and working with them to refine their reporting processes.

You know, I think that we have greater confidence that there are better checks and balances in place at the institutions that hopefully would catch such a situation. I know that the University of Manitoba has taken great efforts to revise their policies and processes, and we do feel good about that.

So we're spending a lot more time in the department with the finance folks in each institution. Ultimately, when legislation comes into place, should it come into place, having the boards have a—you know, the right size, for instance, number of people around the table and better clarity through legislation, is also, I think, going to make it even stronger so that we can be assured that the governance of the institution is appropriate.

But I feel like there's better individual processes happening and—at each institution with our meetings with them and reviewing the financials, and then as we progress into sort of finalizing some of the plans that will happen through legislation, I think it's going to have overarching sort of stronger oversight by boards.

**MLA Dela Cruz:** I have a really quick question; I know that folks are antsy to get out of here.

So I think it goes without saying that we want as many health-care grads as possible to stay here in Manitoba for the long run. And so my question is, how does the department track student success in the labour market after graduation, whether folks stay in province or migrate elsewhere for work?

**Ms. Forster:** That's a really timely question that we spend a lot of time talking about with our institutions and with our sister Department of Health. There's—the department is moving—meeting sort of bi-weekly with Health staff talking about this very thing.

Each institution has its own processes for surveying its graduates, and that is helping. And we're also able to track the numbers that—of health-care workers that are getting employed in the public health-care system. But once we get the student level data, I think we're going to be able to do a lot more there, and that will also help us to identify where we need to do more in terms of retaining talent in Manitoba. And that's also something that we spend a lot of time talking about.

So I think that the institutions are doing a lot of work on tracking their health-care grads, and certainly the Department of Health has their whole system in terms of approaches to ensuring that people are getting offers. But I think that once we get the student level data system in, we'll be able to see it.

\* (20:10)

We've also introduced a new process where, you know, it—all hands on deck and taking all efforts to try

to encourage people to work in Manitoba. But, like, a few months before graduation—actually, we've bumped it probably, now, to six months before graduation—for all health-care graduates in the province of Manitoba. We're sending letters that are really enthusiastic, letting them know that we would welcome them to work in Manitoba, and they're given a website to apply and connect.

But it is certainly a timely area of focus for a lot of the department and other departments and the institutions themselves.

**The Chairperson:** Hearing no further questions or comments, I will put the question on the reports.

Auditor General's Report—Oversight of Post-Secondary Institutions, dated October 2020—pass.

Does the committee agree to—hold on a second. We did all of them, eh?

Does the committee agree to complete consideration of the chapter Oversight of Post-Secondary Institutions within the Auditor General's Report—Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated March 2023? *[Agreed]*

This chapter is accordingly completed for consideration.

**An Honourable Member:** By saying all the words, does it count?

**The Chairperson:** Yes, I fell apart on that, too.

Does the committee agree to complete consideration of the chapter Oversight of Post-Secondary Institutions within the Auditor General's Report—Follow Up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated February 2025? *[Agreed]*

This chapter is accordingly completed for consideration.

Before the committee rises for the day, I would ask that all members please leave behind their copies of the reports so that they may be used again at future meetings.

The hour being 8:12, what is the will of the committee?

**Some Honourable Members:** Rise.

**The Chairperson:** Committee rise.

**COMMITTEE ROSE AT:** 8:12 p.m.

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