

Re: Ministry of Adv Ed & Tech Annual Report, 2010-11

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology (AET) has released its 2010-11 Annual Report (<http://www.aet.alberta.ca/media/294108/aet-annual-report-2010-11.pdf>)

The Annual Report, which forms part of the Public Accounts of the Province, includes the audited consolidated financial statements of the Ministry and a comparison of actual performance results with targets set out in the Ministry's business plan. The report also includes the financial statements of entities making up the Ministry, and regulated funds and provincial agencies for which the Minister is responsible, as well as other financial information. [N.B. The Ministry comprises the Department of Advanced Education and Technology, the Access to the Future Fund, the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, the four Alberta Innovates corporations, and the public post-secondary institutions.]

According to the Minister, Mr. Weadick, highlights for 2010-11 include the creation of closer connections between Campus Alberta and the Alberta Innovates system, and the implementation of collaborative planning processes to support greater system-wide cooperation. The Minister cites the development of *Alberta's Health Research and Innovation Strategy* (a cross-ministry initiative with Alberta Health and Wellness), and the launch of the Campus Alberta Administration (CAA), as contributing to 'clear goals, greater efficiencies and new avenues of collaboration both with, and amongst, our key stakeholders and partners.' Three subcommittees of the CAA were struck to look at system-wide collaboration on international education, Aboriginal learning outcomes, and common IT solutions.

On the Advanced Education side, the government funded more than 3,500 new certificate, diploma and degree spaces last year, in response to 'significant increases in applications' to post-secondary institutions. Despite tight budget guidelines, the Ministry provided some \$2 billion in operating funding to PSE institutions, and over \$600 million in support for expansion and preservation of facilities. At the same time, AET implemented a new approach to investment for 2010-11, 'focused on outcomes as the basis for funding.' According to the Annual Report this approach 'will help ensure system-wide sustainability, responsiveness and alignment.'

The Campus Alberta Planning Framework (CAPF), also launched in 2010, was specifically designed to help align institutional objectives with those of the system as a whole, and to this end provides a baseline of data on 'major economic, research, demographic, enrolment and mobility trends' affecting demand and capacity. (CAPF 2011 should be released soon.)

Affordability remains a concern for Alberta post-secondary students, and last year the government increased funding for Alberta Student Loans to \$250 million, (while it decreased provincial grants and bursaries to \$33 million), providing assistance to some 52,800 full-time students. (Last year, AET also awarded about \$70 million in scholarships to over 36,000 students.) Further, in an attempt to help graduates to

manage their education-related debt, the Ministry set up the Repayment Assistance Plan for provincial student loans, which ties repayments to earnings and family size.

On the research and innovation side, the 2010-11 Annual Report highlights the Ministry's new role in facilitating 'alignment, collaboration and investment in priority areas with Alberta Innovates and Campus Alberta.' The launch in January 2010 of the four provincially-funded Alberta Innovates corporations, taking the place of long-standing research bodies such as the AHFMR, is seen as crucial in providing a framework for 'strengthening research capacity, coordinating planning and prioritizing investments.' The four AI corporations received a total of \$230 million in provincial funding in 2010-11. According to AET, the implementation of strategic initiatives and collaborative planning processes involving the AI corporations and other GoA ministries 'will provide vital guidance to move the innovation system forward in a focused, coordinated way.'

Further still from the groves of academe, AET reports that the Alberta Enterprise Corporation in 2010 launched 'a strategy to fund Alberta managers of venture capital investment funds and led a group of technology sector industry leaders in developing new networks for venture capital investors and tech entrepreneurs.' Meanwhile, the Alberta Innovates Connector Service was set up 'to help businesses, entrepreneurs, researchers, investors and service providers connect with the resources they need to develop business and research products.' It may well come as a surprise to some post-secondary academic staff members that all of these business development initiatives – and others, such as the Alberta Innovation Voucher Program – are the responsibility of AET! The Ministry has also been active in establishing research and commercialization agreements with the private and public sector partners, in Canada and abroad.

Finally, the detailed financials contained in the Annual Report are always worth looking at. Total government funding provided to Alberta PSE institutions (public and private), and to the four Alberta Innovates research corporations, appears on page 58, broken down into operating grants and infrastructure grants. The Deputy Minister's remuneration is listed on page 59. The summary financial statements of the PSE institutions, which begin at page 79, provide details of annual salary and benefits for each president.