



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Resource Stewardship

Ministry of Aboriginal Relations
Consideration of Main Estimates

Wednesday, November 4, 2015
9 a.m.

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First Session**

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W), Deputy Chair

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Also in Attendance

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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Participants

Ministry of Aboriginal Relations
Hon. Kathleen T. Ganley, Minister
Donavon Young, Deputy Minister

9 a.m.

Wednesday, November 4, 2015

[Ms Goehring in the chair]

**Ministry of Aboriginal Relations
Consideration of Main Estimates**

The Chair: Good morning. I'd like to call this meeting to order. Welcome, everyone. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

I'd ask that we go around the table and introduce ourselves for the record. Madam Minister, please introduce your staff when we get to you. I'm Nicole Goehring. I'm the chair of this committee and MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Loewen: Todd Loewen, deputy chair, MLA, Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Stier: Pat Stier, MLA, Livingstone-Macleod.

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

Mr. Hanson: Dave Hanson, MLA, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mrs. Aheer: Leela Aheer, MLA, Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mr. van Dijken: Glenn van Dijken, MLA, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. Drysdale: Wayne Drysdale, MLA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. McIver: Ric McIver, MLA, Calgary-Hays.

Ms Ganley: I'm Kathleen Ganley. I'm the MLA for Calgary-Buffalo. I'm also the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. Today with me I have my deputy minister, Donavon Young; assistant deputy minister of consultation and land claims, Stan Rutwind; assistant deputy minister of First Nations and Métis relations, Clay Buchanan; assistant deputy minister of aboriginal women's initiatives, Tracy Balash; Lorne Harvey, assistant deputy minister of corporate services; Howard Wong, executive director and senior financial officer of corporate services; and Jessica Johnson, who is the director of communications.

Mr. Rodney: Morning, everyone. Dave Rodney, MLA, Calgary-Lougheed. I'm honoured to be the critic, or advocate, for the PC caucus of Aboriginal Relations.

Ms Kazim: I'm Anam Kazim, the MLA for Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Dang: Thomas Dang, MLA for Edmonton-South West.

Ms Woollard: Denise Woollard, MLA for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Mr. Rosendahl: Eric Rosendahl, MLA, West Yellowhead.

Ms Babcock: Erin Babcock, MLA, Stony Plain.

Mr. Horne: Trevor Horne, MLA, Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Sucha: Good morning. Graham Sucha, MLA for Calgary-Shaw.

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

Ms Bianchi: I'm Giovana Bianchi, committee clerk.

The Chair: Thank you, everyone. Please note that the microphones are being operated by *Hansard*, and we'd ask that BlackBerrys, iPhones, et cetera, be turned off or set to silent or vibrate and not placed on the table as they may interfere with the audiofeed.

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates. Before we proceed with consideration of the main estimates for the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations, I would like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.01(6), the rotation is as follows. The minister or the member of Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may make opening remarks not exceeding 10 minutes. For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of the third party, if any, and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent members and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes private members of the government caucus and the minister may speak. For the time remaining we will follow the same rotation just outlined to the extent possible; however, the speaking times are reduced to five minutes as set out in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

Members may speak more than once; however, speaking times for the first rotation are limited to 10 minutes at any one time. A minister and a member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. For the final rotation, with speaking times of five minutes, once again a minister and a member may combine their speaking time for a maximum total of 10 minutes. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their speech if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time.

If members have any questions regarding speaking times or the rotation, please feel free to send a note or speak directly to me or the committee clerk about the process.

Three hours have been scheduled to consider the estimates for the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations. With the concurrence of the committee I will call a five-minute break near the midpoint of the meeting. The clock will be stopped for the break, and the meeting end time will be adjusted accordingly to accommodate this. Does anyone oppose?

As no one is opposing, we will do this at the break.

Committee members, ministers, and other members who are not committee members may participate. Ministry officials may be present, and at the direction of the minister officials from the ministry may address the committee. Members' staff may be present and, space permitting, may sit at the table or behind their members along the committee room wall. Members have priority for seating at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to three hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule and we will adjourn. Otherwise, we will adjourn at 12 o'clock p.m. or shortly thereafter if a break is taken.

Points of order will be dealt with as they arise, and the clock will continue to run.

Any written material provided in response to questions raised during the main estimates should be tabled by the minister in the Assembly for the benefit of all members.

The vote on estimates is deferred until consideration of all ministry estimates has concluded and will occur in Committee of Supply on November 23, 2015.

If there are amendments, an amendment to the estimates cannot seek to increase the amount of the estimates being considered, change the destination of a grant, or change the destination or

purpose of a subsidy. An amendment may be proposed to reduce an estimate, but the amendment cannot propose to reduce the estimate by its full amount. The vote on amendments is deferred until Committee of Supply convenes on November 23, 2015. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are being moved. Twenty copies of amendments must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

I would now like to invite the Minister of Aboriginal Relations to begin with her opening remarks.

Ms Ganley: Thank you. Alberta is home to one of the largest indigenous populations in Canada. Close to a quarter million people claim indigenous ancestry in this province. As a ministry and a government we are committed to a new relationship with indigenous people. We have and will continue to engage our partners in a manner that promotes and supports a relationship that is based on trust, respect, and reconciliation.

Our first step towards reconciliation was to apologize for Alberta's role in the federal residential school system. Premier Notley apologized on behalf of past governments for not taking a stand to stop children from being ripped from their homes, stripped of their culture, language, and identity.

Alberta also joined the call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, which was one of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In addition, the commission's recommendation to call upon all levels of government to implement the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples as a framework for reconciliation: our work on that is already under way. The Premier's message has been very clear. We need to rethink our relationship with indigenous people and communities to ensure that they're involved in decisions that impact their rights for the benefit of all Albertans. Premier Notley and I have had initial meetings with the chiefs from treaties 6, 7, and 8 as well as the Métis Nation of Alberta to hear their concerns and priorities. Cabinet ministers have been looking at their policies and procedures to see where they can be aligned with the principles of the UN declaration consistent with Canadian and Alberta law.

The function of this department is strategic co-ordination, relationship management, and initiatives to support grants for specific programs. We work with our partners in Human Services, Health, and Education on delivering these programs, but we are not the lead on many of them.

This department received a 5 per cent reduction, or \$2.3 million, under the previous government. Budget 2015 has been designed to reflect our commitment by including additional funding, secured by the new government, in the amount of \$1 million. This funding will go to implement the objectives of the UN declaration and for other projects. The budget this year reflects an increase of \$1 million for 2015-16 and \$3 million for each year from 2016 to 2018.

9:10

This will be used to deliver on our commitment to build a new relationship with indigenous people and to support initiatives that will enable them to better participate socially and economically. The proposed increase includes funding to support First Nations engagement tables and the implementation of the UN declaration and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations as well as funding to meet our federal, provincial, territorial commitments stemming from the national round-table on missing and murdered indigenous women and to lead the development on an action plan for indigenous women. This includes community-based initiatives to improve socioeconomic outcomes for indigenous women and girls.

The department's total budget is \$204,588,000. Of that, just over \$165 million, or roughly 80 per cent, is grant funding: \$126.3 million is for the First Nations development fund – this is casino revenue, and it's allocated to assist First Nations in development – \$10 million plus an additional \$8 million to address specific infrastructure projects is provided, as outlined in the long-term arrangements with the Métis settlements; \$7.7 million for the aboriginal business investment fund; \$6.3 million for consultation capacity to First Nations; \$2.3 million each for the Canada-Alberta job grant and the aboriginal economic partnerships program; \$1.5 million for funding of the Métis Nation of Alberta; and just over a million for the native friendship centres and northern Alberta development annual grants.

Twenty-eight point six million dollars is for the 235 full-time equivalents that staff the department; \$7.2 million is allocated to flood mitigation, \$2.4 million for legal support, and \$1.3 million for operations.

This budget also includes \$8 million in one-time capital funding to support critical infrastructure projects in the Métis settlements, as I referenced earlier, pursuant to the long-term agreement.

We continue to support the First Nations flood recovery as a result of the floods that devastated many areas in southern Alberta in June of 2013. Work is under way to support affected communities and small businesses to help them return to predisaster levels and improve their quality of life. We expect to recover most of the invested funding from the federal government through the disaster recovery program, or DRP.

This budget also allows important work to continue on strategies to advance indigenous people's social and economic circumstances in collaboration with indigenous communities and organizations. The ministry is working to ensure that indigenous people's constitutional rights are protected, that the air, land, and water that they and all our communities rely on are protected, and that indigenous peoples can build a more prosperous, self-reliant, and culturally strong community. Our government is committed to working in partnership with indigenous people so they are able to participate in a more meaningful way and therefore benefit from the economy in this province.

Budget 2015 will allow our ministry to renew the policy on consultation with First Nations on land and natural resource management. This new policy will be developed in collaboration with First Nations and industry. This will require enhanced, comprehensive engagement with First Nations as well as industry and other stakeholders to ensure that the consultation policy is responsive to their evolving needs. In addition to helping to enhance our relationship with First Nations, this exercise will also benefit industry and the economy. A consistent consultation policy supported by First Nations, government, and industry stakeholders will provide greater clarity and certainty for all parties involved.

We want to listen and learn from our indigenous partners. Their voices matter, and we want their input. We will also work with First Nations and industry to develop a new way to fund consultation capacity that meets the needs of indigenous people and industry.

In closing, Budget 2015 reflects our commitment to improve the quality of life of indigenous people in Alberta by including them in the decisions that directly impact their well-being and culture. We know there is a significant gap for indigenous people when it comes to health care, education, and living conditions. We want to complement federal funding, to work together with indigenous people to help close these unacceptable gaps. Aboriginal Relations works closely with other ministries such as Human Services, Education, Municipal Affairs, and Environment and Parks to achieve these goals. We are committed to respectful engagement with indigenous people, which is also consistent with the principles

and objectives of the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. The UN declaration is far reaching and has opportunities and implications that can reverberate for generations to come. That is what we are diligently working on for the benefit of all Albertans.

I would be glad to answer your questions at this time.

The Chair: Thanks, Madam Minister.

For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. Would you like the timer to be set for 20-minute intervals so that you are aware of time, or would you prefer to let the full hour flow without interruption?

Mr. Hanson: Twenty-minute intervals would be great. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Member. You may speak.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Chair, Minister Ganley. I forgot to introduce my right hand, Maureen Gough, sitting to my right here, my assistant. Sorry, Maureen.

Minister Ganley, I believe we're in agreement that education both for First Nations and Métis communities and Inuit as well as the general public is key to addressing the ongoing issues faced by society both for indigenous people and Albertans. I feel that we need to pursue continued co-operation between all levels of government, including First Nations, Métis, and industry, to work to improve education prospects nation-wide.

Unfortunately, the main industry partners, especially in the north, particularly the oil and gas industry, are continually being cut off at the knees by policies being implemented by this government so far. The oil and gas industry has been very involved with First Nations communities in the north. Some have actually formed partnerships for mutually beneficial projects, which will benefit all of Alberta. I've actually witnessed some of the signings at ceremonies. They get it. They need to work together to improve relations between oil and gas and the communities up there so that everybody is benefiting. I think we should be focused on developing more opportunities like this in all areas to promote prosperity and opportunities across the province.

I'll now start with my questions. I would like to go back and forth with the minister.

One of the things that immediately jumps out at me, Minister Ganley, is that while your government seems to have a strong commitment – and I applaud you for that – to supporting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities and peoples, the budget for this ministry is one of the very smallest of the entire government. I think we're at .4 per cent of the entire budget. Are there any other funding allocations for First Nations and Métis communities and peoples through Justice and Education and other ministries? I think you alluded to that in your opening statements, but could you just kind of expand on that a bit for us?

Ms Ganley: Absolutely. Well, I'd first like to point out that we're aware of the wonderful work that many industry partners have been doing all over this province in terms of working with First Nations. In fact, many First Nations have brought that to our attention, as have many industry partners. We're certainly not interested in cutting those relationships off, and in fact we encourage them.

With respect, specifically, to your question in terms of the funding in the department, as you'll probably be aware, constitutionally the indigenous people fall under the rubric of the federal government, so the sort of primary funding that goes through is coming federally. The function of this department is to assist the provincial government in its interactions – since First Nations and other Albertans all live in Alberta, we need to work together – and to kind of help out and support in closing those really critical gaps.

9:20

Up until recently – and we're very hopeful, actually, that this is going to change – the federal government really hasn't from my perspective been meeting its constitutional obligations to support First Nations, and as a result there's been a significant lag. For instance, the education funding that First Nations students receive lags significantly behind the funding provided to other Albertan students by the province. We are incredibly hopeful that with this new federal government and their commitment to the UN declaration going forward . . .

Mr. Hanson: Sorry to interrupt, but if we could just get back to – I was asking: what other ministries in the province are actually providing funding to First Nations communities?

Ms Ganley: Well, I mean, this department funds directly. In terms of the budgets of other departments I'm not necessarily aware. I'm certainly aware that there are some targeted scholarships in other ministries, but you'd probably do best to ask those ministers. Certainly, they are working through their portfolios to implement the UN declaration, so I expect that those numbers will be moving in the immediate future.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. I guess I'll skip my next question, as to how it's working.

You had mentioned in your opening statement that there was funding in Education and other ministries, and I guess that was my first question. Advanced Education, Health: are there specific line items in those ministries for helping out with indigenous communities? I was wondering how those work together with your department.

Ms Ganley: I would expect so, but you would have to ask. Those ministers will be versed on their budgets, more so than I am. I mean, in terms of services delivered directly on-reserve like education, those services are meant to be delivered by the federal government. There's some question as to historically how well that has been done, but they're meant to be delivered by the federal government.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you.

Now, the overall budget increase is approximately 3 per cent, and I'm not going to bother going into the statements by the Finance minister about keeping all our ministries at zero. That's for another time. Over the 2014-15 period actuals we've got a 3 per cent increase. However, this section also has an increase in line items 1.1 to 1.4, ministry support services, of 17.5 per cent. In a time when financial constraint is so critical to Alberta, why is the ministry increasing the operating expenses to such a degree?

Ms Ganley: Sorry. Could you just hang on a second while I get to it? Line 1.4?

Mr. Hanson: Lines 1.1 through 1.4.

Ms Ganley: Yes, I do see those numbers although I think I should correct, perhaps, a misapprehension. This department took at the beginning of the year, under the previous government, a 5 per cent reduction. We have added a million dollars back in, but that doesn't amount to an increase, so overall the budget will be less.

Mr. Hanson: Are you saying that the actuals in your report here, the actuals for 2014-15, \$4,312,000, are incorrect?

Ms Ganley: The approximate decrease was 3.5 per cent. There was an increase in a number of areas and a decrease in a number of areas, but when you offset them against each other, overall it's a decrease.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. So, then, those numbers are correct here, that we're looking at in the estimates?

Ms Ganley: The numbers in the estimates? Yes, they're correct. They go: in the budget for 2014-15, \$212,112,000; then, for 2015-16, \$204,588,000. So that's definitely a smaller number.

Mr. Hanson: Like I said, I was basing my increase on what is stated as the actual for that column, \$4,312,000, and the estimate, \$5,066,000. It shows a 17 per cent increase.

My next question, then, on that: how does this increase in the ministry relate to improved services to the people and communities?

Ms Ganley: Well, again, there is no increase.

In terms of relating to people, there was the decrease at the beginning of the year and then . . .

Mr. Hanson: Sorry. I'm looking at page 18 of the estimates, the column under operating expenses. The actual is showing \$4,312,000, and your budget estimate for 2015-16 is \$5,066,000. That's clearly a 17 and a half per cent increase.

Ms Ganley: Right. Our budget for last year was \$212,112,000, and our budget for this year is \$204,588,000. It's right there in the estimates. We're looking at budget 2014-15 and budget 2015-16. If you're talking about the actuals, I wasn't around, so I don't know what happened last year.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. My question isn't about the bottom-line number. I'm talking about the minister's office.

Ms Ganley: My office? My office has taken a decrease.

Mr. Hanson: Now you're really confusing me.

Under operating expense the minister's office, the associate minister's office, the deputy minister's office, communications, corporate services, line items 1.1 to 1.5, show an increase of 17 and a half per cent.

Ms Ganley: Sorry. You're saying that the budget of \$4,852,000 to \$5,066,000 is an increase of 17 and a half percent?

Mr. Hanson: No. I'm comparing the estimate to the actuals. The actuals spent in 2014-15 were \$4,312,000.

Ms Ganley: Right. What we're talking about here is the budget, and the budget was \$4,852,000, and now it's \$5,066,00, which is not an increase of 17 per cent, as best I'm aware.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. We're not going to bother chasing this one anymore.

Maybe I can rephrase my question: can you relate the improved services coming out of the minister's office to what has happened in the past? What are your plans from the office going forward to increase or improve relations with First Nations communities?

Ms Ganley: Absolutely. Moving forward, we're looking to basically renew our relationship with indigenous peoples. In part, that has begun with the Premier's letter, which went out to all her ministers. They are currently in the process of reviewing their portfolios, their policies and procedures to look for places where they are currently in line with the UN declaration or where they aren't in line with the UN declaration or where there are opportunities to bring them better in line with the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. That work is already under

way. We've received some initial submissions, and some conversations have been going back and forth.

In addition, we have been going out and seeking input from the communities. We've had meetings with several indigenous groups. In addition, I've had the opportunity to introduce the Premier to the chiefs in treaties 6, 7, and 8. We've also made multiple community visits because we think that in understanding what it is that First Nations and other indigenous people are advocating for, it's really critical for the government to understand what their position is and where they're coming from. We've gone out to a number of communities so that when they are sort of explaining that their water is low or that their environment has been impacted, we can see what they're doing.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. Thank you.

Ms Ganley: In terms of, you know, going forward, the intention is to set up sort of agreements for engagement so that we can work with First Nations to develop some goals and some milestones so that we can benchmark where we're headed going forward, and that process is going very well.

Mr. Hanson: And that's working with the federal government or over and above what the federal government is going to do?

Ms Ganley: Well, this is a relationship between ourselves and First Nations. We are extremely hopeful that the federal government will be a much more active partner going forward.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Line item 1.4, communications: the 2014-15 budget showed \$642,000, the actuals were \$331,000, and now we're looking at an estimate of \$642,000 again. Can you just explain that? What happened there? The money wasn't spent?

Ms Ganley: I'm sorry. What line are you on?

Mr. Hanson: Line 1.4, communications.

9:30

Ms Ganley: Right. The budget is exactly the same. In terms of what would have happened in 2014-15, I obviously wasn't around.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. If we only spent \$331,000 of the \$642,000, I'm just kind of curious why you boosted it right back up to the \$642,000.

Ms Ganley: Well, I can't speak directly to why the previous government would have budgeted it that way, but in the current budget Public Affairs was restructured. We moved some people over from the Public Affairs Bureau, both the comms director and the assistant comms director, into our ministry. As to why they didn't spend the amount in past years, I really couldn't tell you.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Well, I understand that you're new to this, just as I am, but a lot of the people in your office were around with the previous government, so maybe they could explain what happened there.

Okay. My next question, then: can you explain or, if you can't explain because you're new to the department, maybe have somebody explain your budget of \$642,000 for communications when the Public Affairs Bureau is charged with that task, why the money wasn't spent, and why we're going back to that number?

Ms Ganley: Just so we're all clear, the function of this process is to evaluate the budget for 2015-16. In comparison to the budget for the previous year it's the same. I'm not really sure I understand why that requires any sort of explanation.

Mr. Hanson: I'm just wondering, you know, if the money wasn't required last year, why all of a sudden we need another \$300,000 for communications.

Ms Ganley: Well, the budget is exactly the same as it was last year, so we don't require any additional amount. I also understand that there are two more people, who have been transferred from the Public Affairs Bureau, if that helps you out at all.

Mr. Hanson: Oh, that would probably help to explain that. Thank you.

Ms Ganley: Well, that's what I said. So there you go.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Moving on to First Nations and Métis relations, the long-term arrangements are a 10-year, \$113.5 million commitment between the government of Alberta and the Metis Settlements General Council to address issues of governance and accountability. The long-term sustainability in establishing a fiduciary relationship between the government of Alberta and the Metis Settlements General Council is similar to the relationships between the government and other local governments. The annual report states that \$85 million was given by the government. Where is that amount reported in this budget? I don't see that number.

Ms Ganley: The \$85 million is the total cost of the long-term arrangement. It's over 10 years. It's deployed over multiple years.

In terms of the line item there will be \$10 million in this fiscal year, which is reflected in 2.1, First Nations and Métis relations. So in terms of support to the Métis settlements there'll be that \$10 million, that was part of the \$85 million over 10 years in the long-term arrangement, and I believe there's an additional \$8 million to address critical infrastructure projects.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you.

I guess, more importantly: how is the plan working? How are the LTAs improving relationships between Métis settlements and the government of Alberta?

Ms Ganley: The purpose of the long-term agreement was designed to essentially bring infrastructure on the settlements up to what we have everywhere else. It was designed to increase the infrastructure and the abilities on those settlements and to sort of pass that over so that the settlements could become self-sustaining. As of right now we have been moving forward on that, and there has been some good progress although we think that there may be some things in the long-term arrangement that we have to work on a little bit. We've been hearing some concerns from Métis people.

Mr. Hanson: I would say so. Yeah. Since being elected, in May, I've had several meetings with the Métis settlement communities and members. LTAs have become quite a divisive issue between the Métis settlements. In fact, according to one meeting I went to, there are four settlement councils that refuse to participate, another two that will do so only grudgingly and if there are changes made to the LTAs, and only two who participate willingly in the government of Alberta LTAs.

Ms Ganley: That isn't quite reflective of the numbers we have, but we do understand that there have been some issues with the LTAs. The difficulty is that historically people on Métis settlements have not been asked to pay for their utilities. They haven't been asked to pay sort of their share of utilities, and the provincial government, as a result, has had to maintain those. Our hope is to make those communities more independent and more self-sustaining, so we want to increase the amount that people are paying up until we reach

the point where they are paying the cost of maintaining that infrastructure. Of course, sometimes people are resistant to paying for services. We're working on that, and we're working on it with them to do it in a way that they feel can achieve those goals.

Mr. Hanson: From our perspective, there are a couple of issues. The LTAs are intended to allow the government of Alberta to treat Métis settlement councils very similarly to a municipal government. The settlements that are against this hold that they are a special level of government in their own right and refuse to be treated like any other town anywhere else in the province. They do not wish to relinquish their unique status and place in Alberta culture and history by being treated like any other town. On page 17 of the annual report we read, "Some Metis people and communities have unique rights." The Métis settlement councils are afraid that they will lose that unique rights status through the implementation of the LTAs. Is there any reassurance to those communities that they're not going to lose those unique rights?

Ms Ganley: Absolutely. Métis people do have unique rights. Historically the government of Alberta has had this special relationship with the Métis settlements. Recently the Daniels case has suggested that Métis people may fall under federal jurisdiction. We're hoping that we can resolve that issue with the federal government because what we don't want is for the legislation to become invalid, and then they might lose the land.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. We can't have that.

Ms Ganley: I mean, we're alive to that issue, and we're working on it.

In terms of their special status: no one has any intention of removing their special status from them. We're aware that they have specific rights, including harvesting rights. In fact, we're working diligently. We have a Métis settlements consultation policy that has been reached with the settlements. Everyone is happy with that, so we're moving forward to define what the traditional areas are over which that harvesting occurs so that we can tell proponents when they need to consult with Métis communities. We're definitely not trying to remove any of those rights. I think the intention is just to make them self-sustaining so that they're able to care for the communities themselves.

Mr. Hanson: I think that's one of their goals as well. I would argue that they're not all totally happy with it all. The settlement councils maintain that they were simply told about decisions that had been made, not blaming you for it – I mean, it's previous – and had not had the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the consultation. I think that something that we hear all the time from all levels in First Nations and Métis is the lack of consultation. I'm hoping that we can improve on that, and I hope that's one of your goals.

Ms Ganley: I would agree with you there, and we definitely do have a goal of improving that.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you. When you and I met earlier this summer, I brought up my concerns, and I think you agreed that you had heard some of the same concerns going through the summer.

Are funds available under budget line 2.1 to address the divisiveness caused by the LTAs? How are we going to utilize that \$10 million that you've got set aside there to get all of the Métis communities onside and in agreement?

9:40

Ms Ganley: Well, the way the long-term arrangement is structured, it's my understanding that essentially that money goes through to

the council, and then they work on prioritizing which projects get handled first. So the intention is to work with them. I have definitely heard that there are challenges with that agreement, but I think that those are challenges that we sort of need to sit down at the table and work out. I guess not all problems are solved by money. I think that this is more of a sit down and talk about it situation. That money is intended for infrastructure projects.

Mr. Hanson: Is there any transparency that can be put in place so that the communities can actually see how much money is coming into their community, what specific projects it was earmarked for, and whether it's actually being spent on those projects?

Ms Ganley: Well, the Métis settlements council is meant to publish that list. So we flow the infrastructure money through to them, they set priorities, and then they're sort of meant to be sharing with the communities what those priorities are and why the projects are being done in whatever order they've chosen to do them in.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you.

Is there any plan to undertake a review of the LTAs with real opportunities for consultation that include wider participation, including the elders as well as settlement councillors? I hear a lot from my communication with them that the elders in the community that aren't necessarily on the council would like a little bit more input and more recognition on that. Have you heard the same thing?

Ms Ganley: Well, we've certainly been hearing that people are not necessarily happy with the way the agreement is structured, and we are working with them to sort of come to an agreement on a couple of minor points. Of course, the long-term agreement has a fair amount of money associated with it, and I think that at this point the government doesn't have a lot to add to it. We're hoping to work with them to find ways to improve that relationship and to make it better without an increase in funding.

Mr. Hanson: Is there any time frame on when we could kind of open up discussions to get more input from Métis nations and communities on the LTAs?

Ms Ganley: We're working on it right now.

Mr. Hanson: You're working on it right now?

Ms Ganley: We're working with them right now on some changes.

Mr. Hanson: So I can tell them that they can expect something soon, six months kind of thing?

Ms Ganley: Well, as I understand it, we're already in discussions with them. I mean, there are specific reviews wired in, but we're not going to wait for that to happen. We have been hearing those concerns, and as I understand, we already have someone discussing those potential changes. I think I've seen some proposals come forward. Most of the complaints we've heard surround the percentage of utility cost people are being asked to bear.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah, I know. I've heard that a lot, too.

As I have two Métis communities in my riding, is there any chance that I could be involved in the collaboration on these discussions with your department?

Ms Ganley: I think I have a proposal in front of me now, but going forward, if you're hearing concerns, absolutely I would encourage you to bring those forward.

Mr. Hanson: Sure. Yeah. You know, if I could add my input, it would be awesome.

Ms Ganley: Sure.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Another major, divisive issue with the Métis settlements – I'm just concentrating on Métis here for a few minutes – is the membership lists. They were promised membership lists in 1990 with the MSA, and it is a real sore spot with a lot of the people that I've had discussions with. Anything included in your budget to address this?

Ms Ganley: The issue with the Métis settlements: again, it's not really one that's necessarily going to be solved by money.

Mr. Hanson: No.

Ms Ganley: The issue is that there was a court decision that said that people couldn't be registered both as a First Nations person and as a Métis person, so the registrar was ordered to strike those names from the list. There has subsequently been some additional court activity on that. It's a complex situation.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah.

Ms Ganley: Again, it's one of those situations where we need to sort of come to a clear policy and decision, and I think it's complicated additionally by the fact that, as it turns out, we may be operating in federal jurisdiction.

Mr. Hanson: No. The MGA is between the Alberta government and the Métis community.

Ms Ganley: I'm sorry; the MGA?

Mr. Hanson: No. I'm sorry. The MSA. That's an agreement that was made in 1990 between the Métis settlements and the government of Alberta. That list was promised to them 25 years ago, and they're getting a little antsy about it. They've asked about it almost on a yearly basis. I'm just wondering if there's a concentrated effort on getting that list provided to them. I know that some settlements already have the list and that some are in the process and, like you said, some things are before the courts as well.

Ms Ganley: The lists are actually updated through the settlements. I understand that within each settlement there's a considerable amount of debate over who should and shouldn't be on the list, and we're doing our best to work with the settlements on that. I think the challenge is that the people on the different settlements have very different views over whether First Nations people should be allowed to stay on those lists or not. So the government is a little bit trapped in the middle, if you will, but we are working to resolve the issue.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. No, I understand. Like I said, it's a very divisive issue, but if there's something that we can do to help and the government can do to help to get that put to rest after 25 years, it would be very much appreciated by a lot of the communities out there.

We'll go over to section 4, the First Nations development fund. The budget is \$128 million, and estimates are \$143 million. What did we do there? We've actually gone from the budget estimate of \$143 million down to \$128 million.

Ms Ganley: The First Nations development fund is flow-through funding from casinos. We have estimated a decrease in revenue for those casinos for this year compared to our estimates last year, although, yeah, it appears that we overestimated a little last year, too.

Mr. Hanson: Any particular reason? What's your reasoning behind looking at a decline?

Ms Ganley: They come from AGLC, the estimates on how much is going to come through the casinos.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. That's just based on information that you're provided, then?

Ms Ganley: It's based on information that we're provided, yeah, from AGLC.

Mr. Hanson: Looking at the 2014-15 annual report, a performance measure for the First Nations development fund is: number of aboriginal strategic economic development initiatives, partnerships, and capacity building projects. The actual this year is down 10 from 2013-14, from 51 to 41. I see that you do have a decline. Does that explain the total drop in number of projects that you're looking at?

Ms Ganley: Right. The number of projects we can approve is based on the amount of money that comes in, so if there's less money coming in, there's less money going out.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah, I understand that. Is each one of these 41 projects given a certain lump sum of money, or are some worth \$5 million and some worth \$200,000? How can we estimate our number of projects?

Ms Ganley: They're grant applications that come in from the First Nations, and then my department approves them because we're sort of working with First Nations for them to decide what the best strategy on that is. Typically, if they make a proposal and it's in line with what's out there, we approve it. For the most part, those are projects. You know, they sort of decide what the priorities are, they bring forward the projects, and then they get the grants on that basis.

Mr. Hanson: I guess my question is: why would we drop the project numbers from 51 to 41 if there isn't a specific amount of money going to each project? I mean, you could . . .

Ms Ganley: I'm sorry. What page are you on?

Mr. Hanson: Page 12 of the annual report.

Mr. Young: Which annual report?

Mr. Hanson: Oh. I'm sorry. It's in the ministry business plan.
9:50

Ms Ganley: Performance measure 1(a) is the economic initiatives. These are economic development funding, so they're not FNDF funding. It's different funding. The reason for the different number of projects in this case is essentially the size of the projects that are applying.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you very much.

Can we just clarify the size of some of the projects? If you average out the 41 initiatives in that, the actual money that was spent comes out to about \$3.1 million per project. Are there any that are a lot bigger and some that are a lot smaller? Do you have a list of the projects that were approved?

Ms Ganley: I have a list since April 1. Again, these aren't the First Nation development funds; these are the economic initiatives ones. They're alphabetical. I could read them out.

Mr. Hanson: No, that's not necessary. If you can just provide us with the list at another time, that would be great.

Ms Ganley: Yeah, that's fine. I guess we can follow up by written answer. I was going to say that it doesn't seem like a good use of time for me to read them.

Mr. Hanson: Sure. That'd be great. Can you just give us an idea of the range of the projects?

Ms Ganley: Oh, the range? I can tell you that right now. We're looking at – I think the lowest here is \$5,000, and the highest is about \$150,000. I think those are the outliers.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. One question is: what would be your return on investment on these funds? What's been the impact on communities where these projects are housed?

Ms Ganley: Sorry. We're just looking for some clarity. You're talking about those same projects under 1(a), the economic initiatives?

Mr. Hanson: Yes.

Ms Ganley: The way we deal with these – this funding is fairly broad ranging, as it turns out. It covers everything from feasibility studies, business plans, entrepreneurial capacity development, and workshops, and those are done in conjunction with First Nations. I guess, really, the measure we would have of that is, you know, the movement on the economic scale, so their ability to start and to keep businesses running. It's not really a social return on investment sort of a thing. It's more of a trying to build capacity so that they're able to start businesses and kick-start economies.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Do we have any benchmarks for impacts on local employment on- and off-reserve from these projects?

Ms Ganley: Because of the broad range of outcomes for these projects, it's difficult to apply, shall we say, one measure to it. A lot of it, like a feasibility study, is just going to tell someone whether it is or is not worth starting a business, so it's difficult to kind of measure what the outcome of that is. In terms of developing a business plan, it's hard to know. Did developing that business plan make the business take off, or would it have done it on its own?

Mr. Hanson: Is there any follow-up to see, you know, if you dole out \$100,000, what became of that money and what was produced?

Ms Ganley: For each individual grant we do grant evaluations, and we follow up throughout the project to make sure that they're meeting the sort of benchmarks that were intended for whatever that particular project was. They'll just be different depending on the project.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. So there will be some measurement of social return on investment from those?

Ms Ganley: Most of them aren't really a social return on investment sort of situation, right? It's not like, you know, something that's funded out of Human Services that's going to solve a problem in that sort of way. What it's intended to do is build capacity, so to give skills to individual people so that they're able to do things like evaluate business risk and develop business plans and, hopefully, help other people develop those things. Depending on the individual grant, the measures will be different, but it's not usually a social return on investment sort of a metric.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Moving on, looking at the annual report, we read that the Joint Accountability Review Committee submitted its first report titled Recommendations on Accountability, Enforcement, and Public Interests Provisions by the Joint Accountability Review Committee – that’s a mouthful – to Aboriginal Relations and the Metis Settlements General Council. There were 70 recommendations on how accountability could be strengthened and enhanced. I looked for the report and the recommendations, but I couldn’t find it. Have you yourself reviewed that report?

Ms Ganley: I’m sorry. Could you just tell me where you’re referencing?

Mr. Hanson: It’s in the 2014 annual report, page 18.

Mr. Young: Is it the annual report or the business plan?

Mr. Hanson: You got me again. It’s in the annual report, page 18.

Ms Ganley: The report you’re referencing came to myself. It also went to the Metis Settlements General Council, and we’re currently awaiting their comments on that report.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Have you had a chance to look at it yourself, or you’re waiting for them?

Ms Ganley: I probably couldn’t speak to it off the top of my head, but it’s certainly there.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. That’s reasonable.

The Chair: Sorry to interrupt, but I just wanted to notify the member that we’re in the last 20-minute segment.

Mr. Hanson: Surprising. Well, we’ve got a long way to go here. Okay. If you haven’t had a chance to look at the report, I’m just going to skip these next few questions on that. I would ask: is there any chance that we could get a copy of that report?

Ms Ganley: I think we’re still awaiting comment from the Metis Settlements General Council, and I wouldn’t want to agree to that without having spoken to them about it. It’s part of the evaluation of the long-term arrangement, and I wouldn’t want to commit to give it to you without their sort of approval.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal, section 5. From the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal business plan 2015-2017 we read that “the Appeal Tribunal provides fair, timely, and cost-effective hearing and mediation services.” The performance measures focus on a percentage of decisions made within 60 days of hearing and the timing of resolution of appeals. I guess my question would be: how does a focus on timing of dispute resolution lead to assurance that the decisions are fair? Some being more complex than others, you know, rushing them into 60 days may not be as effective in making sure that everybody has a chance to make sure that their appeals are heard.

Ms Ganley: The purpose of that tribunal is that it’s an independent tribunal, so I don’t have direct oversight of the decisions. However, like any other tribunal, people would have recourse to the courts if they felt that the decision was unfair. That’s sort of, shall we say, a general principle of administrative law. I mean, I have heard from many people that the tribunal is working quite well. People are happy with it. It’s less expensive than having to take their disputes to court. They can get in there faster than having to take their disputes to court. Of course, you know, with any dispute whoever

the party is who doesn’t get necessarily exactly what they want may be unhappy, and they always have recourse to the courts coming out of that. So I guess that would be the method of oversight.

Mr. Hanson: Who would be monitoring the impact of the decisions on the individuals and communities?

10:00

Ms Ganley: Monitoring the impact of the decisions?

Mr. Hanson: Yeah.

Ms Ganley: I mean, we don’t really do that with courts either. Certainly in terms of the communities I’ve heard positive things about having access to that sort of administrative dispute resolution. Independent decision-makers, like independent decision-makers in any body, are free to make their decisions without interference, without political interference from the political branch. That’s actually a really important principle of law. We don’t have direct oversight. Again, usually the recourse, if you don’t like the decision of a body like that, is to apply to the courts for a judicial review.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. So there is an appeal process available to members?

Ms Ganley: Yeah. There will always be a sort of further appeal, but that’s in the judicial branch. Sorry; I’m being told that they have a direct appeal to the Court of Appeal. That will be in the legislation. I’m not completely familiar, but normally oversight of an independent body like that is not done politically; it will be done through the courts.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you very much.

I’m just going to move on and skip a couple here and go to – we’re running out of time – 2.1, capital grants. That’s also in the annual report, page 20. On page 20 of the annual report we read that the government of Alberta provided \$5.6 million to the Lubicon Lake band for housing.

Ms Ganley: I don’t think I have the page, but I think I do know what you’re referencing. It’s the money for the Lubicon.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah.

Ms Ganley: The Lubicon situation, just by way of background, is that they haven’t been given their treaty land entitlement, so they weren’t able to reach resolution with the federal government, and the result of that has been that the living conditions have been quite deplorable. It was actually a pretty embarrassing, embarrassing blight on the face of the province and the entire country that we allowed people to live in those conditions.

The government of Alberta was committed to improving housing for those members, so they were given a number of units. This was actually before my time. But they were provided with a number of family units because, from what I understand, the previous minister had gone up there – not the most recent previous minister; the one before that – and when witnessing the deplorable living conditions, they were given some temporary housing units. We’re still in negotiations between the federal government and the province to sort of resolve that claim so that they can get a more permanent solution, but that was sort of interim housing.

Mr. Hanson: Any idea how many houses they produced for that \$5.6 million?

Ms Ganley: Thirty-five? Oh, sorry. June 2014. Is that what we’re talking about? Sorry; I just want to make sure I’m on the same page

as you. In June 2014 we provided 19 mobile trailers. We're looking to do 35 in total new family units.

Mr. Hanson: And that's all going to fall under that \$5.6 million?

Ms Ganley: Yeah.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Projects like this: are they part of the \$11.4 million in that line item?

Ms Ganley: Sorry; which line, 2.1? No, it isn't. That \$5.6 million was last year, so it would have been in last year's budget.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Under capital grants? Is that part of capital grants of section 2.1 on page 18 of the budget?

Ms Ganley: Yes, it is under 2.1.

Mr. Hanson: It would be included in that? Okay. I know; we're jumping from page to page. What else would be included in that amount for that \$11 million? You've accounted for just about half of that with this deal.

Ms Ganley: Sorry. I'm just going to pull it up here. Okay. We're looking at \$11 million. We have \$8 million as the increased funding to address critical infrastructure projects on the Métis settlements, and then \$3.4 million – wait; this is the same thing.

Sorry. I think I misspoke a moment ago. So \$5.6 million was for the Lubicon situation, and then in terms of the LTA the total allocation was \$11 million, so it was \$3 million last year, \$8 million this year, and the rest of it was housing related to the long-term agreement, so also Métis settlements.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Just looking at that line item in 2014-15, there was actually nothing budgeted in 2014-15. The minister just, after seeing what was happening up at Lubicon, lobbied for \$5.6 million. Is that what happened there?

Ms Ganley: I don't really know. Sorry. We're not particularly well-briefed on things that happened in 2014. We're sort of here to speak to today's budget, but as I understand it, they would have just added new funding to take care of that.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. I understand it completely. If you go up there and have a look at the situation there . . .

Ms Ganley: Apparently, it was in the supplementary estimates that extra funding was received.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Section 6. We'll just jump briefly into consultation and land claims. The budget was increased \$1.1 million over the actuals from last year. Under 6.2 – see, I keep comparing your budget estimates to what was actually spent last year, unfortunately. I guess I should be going back to the budgets.

Ms Ganley: Yeah. I mean, I think the better comparator is usually budget to budget.

Mr. Hanson: Budget to budget.

Ms Ganley: It is a fairly marginal increase there. As I understand, when that office came over – it came over from ESRD, I think – it wasn't fully staffed. I think that that would account for the discrepancy.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. When I look at budgets – I mean, budgets are kind of your best guess.

Ms Ganley: Uh-huh.

Mr. Hanson: Then when you look at the actuals, it's actually the money that got spent under that line item. I guess I'm struggling with how you have a definitive number that was an actual required number, but you base your budget on the best guess of the last government. Why wouldn't you, especially in these leaner times – and I'm not saying that we need to reduce this budget in particular – use that strategy to build your budget?

Ms Ganley: Why do we compare budgets to budgets?

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. Why wouldn't you base your budget on the actual costs of the previous year?

Ms Ganley: Because, I mean, any number of things could have happened in the previous year, right? So budgets are based on what we think things are going to cost, and then any number of things could go differently in the year. I don't even want to speculate because there are so many things that could potentially happen. I'm not particularly well-positioned to speak to what would have happened in that year given that it's not this year. I think this year, because of the peculiar timing, we're more than usually able to forecast.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. But being that land claims are more of a federal issue with First Nations, what is our role for – you know, we have close to \$11 million for consultation office support.

10:10

Ms Ganley: Sorry. What is the aboriginal consultation office?

Mr. Hanson: No, no. My question is that being that the land claims between First Nations are more of a federal issue – we're spending, you know, \$17 million under that consultation land claims section. What are we getting in the province for what we're spending?

Ms Ganley: There are actually a couple of things going on there. Under consultation and land claims the aboriginal consultation office falls, and what that is is that the ACO is the body that determines adequacy of consultation. So when a project proponent comes forward proposing a project, the ACO will tell them which First Nations or Métis settlements now they need to consult with. Then they will go out and do that consultation, and it's the ACO that determines the adequacy of that consultation. They would issue an adequacy of consultation certificate or an interim adequacy of consultation certificate usually before the process moved on to the AER.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Is there any measurable impact of what spending this money is having on First Nations communities? Like, how are we helping them out with – it's a fairly significant chunk of change, and I was just wondering what kind of effect we're having.

Ms Ganley: I guess, with respect to the aboriginal consultation office, that if that office ceased to exist, there would be no certificates of adequacy, so all development in the province would stop. So I guess that's probably a measurable outcome of them existing. They're sort of a necessary piece of – the way it's structured is that it goes through ACO, and then it goes to the AER. If the ACO ceased to exist, either there would be no consultation with First Nations, or the AER would not be able to deem consultation adequate, and no projects would go forward.

Mr. Hanson: So if I'm understanding you correctly, this is in consultation with the oil and gas industry as it affects traditional lands and traditional hunting land?

Ms Ganley: Yeah. This is big C legal consultation. Yeah.

Then with respect to the other pieces – so our role in land claims is comparatively small. Essentially, the federal government has to provide land for the reserve, but it comes from Crown land, so the province is involved insofar as we have to produce the land, and the land has to not have anything on it. With the Lubicon, because we knew roughly where we were looking up for the claim, that land was protected. Sometimes there will be sort of third parties whose interests are going to be impacted by that, and that sort of falls within the province.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. The First Nations communities, bands, councils: how much involvement do they get in these negotiations? I guess what I'm saying is that it isn't just decisions between your department and industry that are pushed on them or suggested to them. Are they involved right from the very beginning on consultation when it comes to development on their traditional land?

Ms Ganley: There are sort of two things going on here, right? Just by way of background, what they're doing – so the aboriginal consultation office actually, really, in my view, is regulating the relationship between two other parties. So when industry wants to put a project in a certain place, it's the aboriginal consultation office that says: based on the geographical location of this project you will need to consult with the following people. Then the industry would go out, and they would have a consultation with the First Nation, and then my department would decide whether that consultation was adequate to allow the project to move forward.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. That's interesting. So it would start with an application to the AER for a project by an oil company or gas company?

Ms Ganley: Yeah. It starts with, well, oil and gas or, I mean, an electricity tower or any sort of project would go through that.

Mr. Hanson: And that falls in with that geodata project? I think we've got a section here on that that I probably won't be able to get to.

Ms Ganley: The geodata project is – the intention is to try to create a database that contains all of the information. Both sides have been unhappy with the consultation process. First Nations feel that they aren't adequately consulted because sometimes we don't necessarily know – you know, we're not just talking about a reserve; we're talking about their traditional territory. Sometimes the government doesn't have the information to know that they've been there, so something will go forward, and then a problem will be raised. They haven't been happy with it. For industry's part, they're a little bit unhappy with it because all the information isn't there, and not everybody is invested in the process. That results in a considerable amount of uncertainty and some legal matters.

Mr. Hanson: From my personal experience in those matters, I think what the issue is is that a lot of times there's – I'm not going to say backroom discussion, but the oil company has already invested a fair bit of money and time in a project by the time it goes to the AER, and then it can be held up by First Nations when, before it ever got to the planning stage, the discussion should have been opened up with First Nations instead of wasting everybody's time. I think that's where the frustration comes in.

The First Nations people feel, when they look at all the work that's been done, that it's like: oh, you guys have been talking about this before you even came and talked to us. On the other hand, the oil company puts all this planning and work together hoping to get support from the provincial government or the AER, and then they feel left out. I think that's where the confusion comes into it. Maybe sitting down and doing a five-year or a 10-year plan with industry and First Nations would be a good place to start with this.

Ms Ganley: I think that, again, because we're doing sort of the regulating between two parties as part of our work on the UN declaration, we are committed to reviewing that consultation policy. It's just, obviously, complicated in the sense that there are a number of parties, both industry proponents and First Nations, that are involved. Some of them are working extremely well together, and some of them are not working so well together.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. With some of the partnerships that I mentioned, up at Frog Lake we were at a reception where they signed a great deal, and it's going to work out fantastic for both the industry party and the First Nations, with job creation on the reserve.

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, but the time has concluded.

Mr. Hanson: So soon?

The Chair: So soon.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you.

The Chair: I would now like to invite the third-party opposition to speak, but first I'd like to note for the record that Mr. Ric McIver is attending as an official substitute for Mr. Wayne Drysdale.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Chair.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you, Minister. Thank you to my colleagues Wayne Drysdale, sitting in, and now to the hon. leader, Ric McIver. I also want to thank Terri Kembal, my assistant, and Ben Li, our researcher, for all of their incredible support.

I expect that the minister would agree that the relationships we have with our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people are of ultimate importance for all Albertans, and it's worthy of note, Chair, that building these relationships has been going on for a very long, long time. It's not new. It's extremely important that we all appreciate the numerous pivotal initiatives that have been implemented over the years. I'd like to highlight a few for the minister and for the members and for all Albertans, just so that we're not starting from scratch, because, in the words of the minister, she wasn't here last year so she doesn't know what happened. I'm very happy to share, and this is given in the spirit of collegiality. This is an ultimately important file. It's not a file; it's people.

In my time as associate minister of wellness, just as one example, I was humbled to be asked to facilitate a number of sessions between our entire cabinet and all of the chiefs from right across Alberta. It was an unforgettable, invaluable experience, and this meeting was just one of many efforts that our government undertook to consult and collaborate with First Nations, Métis, and

Inuit friends. It was a recognition of the earnest and honest efforts that began, indeed, with Peter Lougheed.

Other items that are important to recall – and I'll only do it from this last term alone – include signing a memorandum of understanding with the Siksika and the Stoney Nakoda nations, ensuring that we move forward together to repair and rebuild houses and infrastructure and provide opportunities for skills training. We also hosted the second annual Alberta First Nations Opportunities Forum. Working with the Alberta Education department, the federal government, and the three treaty areas, we took an important step towards that goal with the development of a long-term strategic action plan. We created the First Nations development fund, that's been referred to here today, and it remains an important source of funding for First Nations' economic, social, and community development projects.

10:20

We launched the Aboriginal Peoples of Alberta: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow publication and the Leading the Way: Aboriginal People Today article series. Our government was proud to be involved when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada held its seventh and final national event in Edmonton in March 2014. It was just mentioned about the geodata map, which was created by the ministry and contains important information about the territory over which First Nations not only hunt and fish and trap but do other activities that are of, you know, cultural importance to First Nations.

Additionally, we hosted the Alberta First Nations Opportunities Forum just a couple of years ago, and in 2012-2013 we invested in projects through organizations like Women Building Futures and the Aboriginal Women's Professional Association to support aboriginal women in making career decisions and developing leadership skills and exploring entrepreneurship. In March 2013 our government signed the Métis settlements long-term governance and funding arrangements, and in 2012-2013 Aboriginal Relations allocated over \$545,000 in funding for projects in support of the aboriginal women's initiative.

The ministry also provided \$265,000 to support projects aimed at improving the social well-being of aboriginal women, including the Aboriginal Women's Professional Association, which provided leadership training by and for aboriginal women; the Three Eagle society for awareness to end violence against First Nation girls and women; and the Poundmaker's Lodge Meadowview women's healing centre to provide a safe house and supportive environment for aboriginal women attempting to leave high-risk lifestyles.

The ministry also allocated over \$280,000 in funding for projects to support aboriginal women in the areas of economic development and entrepreneurship, including the Alberta Women Entrepreneurs Association, next step to success capacity building; Women Building Futures, the aboriginal engagement strategy; and the leadership and entrepreneur project.

Finally in this section, Madam Chair and Madam Minister, we also participate in a variety of crossministry and intergovernmental initiatives to ensure the inclusion of aboriginal people and perspectives in the development of economic and social policy. For instance, in partnership with Alberta Human Services, Alberta Aboriginal Relations continued to work collaboratively to promote economic opportunities for aboriginal people and communities. Through the strategic economic initiatives and economic capacity building grant programs the ministry supported almost 50 projects with funding of close to \$3 million.

Madam Chair, please understand and appreciate that this just scratches the surface of the great work that's been accomplished in the past, and that brings us to the present and the future and to

questions for our new NDP government. Let's face it; we are continually told as Albertans that the new NDP government is intent on implementing the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples as one of its highest priorities. As I pointed out in question period back in June, the very first chance I had to ask a question, both to the Premier and to the minister, there was only one single sentence, that said, really, nothing concrete, in the throne speech. Interestingly enough, it was only after that that the Premier offered the apology for residential schools, so if I jump-started that process, I'm happy to have done so.

Additionally, this extremely important initiative, this ministry, appears to be only worth six pages in the government of Alberta's business plan. I've been told by many that that is absolutely shocking. I wonder how Albertans can have confidence that aboriginal relations is indeed a top priority of this government, as we keep hearing, when there's not a lot in this business plan to prove this statement.

My first question is in reference to the business plan, and that, of course, lists 26 priorities. They're one sentence long each. They don't offer any indication as to which priorities the ministry will actually focus on. Madam Chair and members, I believe Albertans deserve a detailed list for each priority outlining the following: who is responsible for performing the work, what the work will involve exactly, and what the budget line is that corresponds with each priority. That's the kind of accountability that Albertans deserve, especially when the government repeatedly highlights its intention to forge new relationships with our aboriginal people.

Now, Minister, I'm a reasonable person. I know that that's a very detailed answer. It's 26 answers times three, to be honest. I know you have a very capable staff, so rather than take up the committee time here and for all members to disperse through Alberta, I would be very happy to have that written and tabled in the Legislature. So a written reply.

I'll move on to question 2.

Ms Ganley: I'm sorry. I'm going to have to cut you off there because I think that the difficulty with the question that you're currently asking is that unlike the previous government, this government feels that we should work in consultation with First Nations in determining what top priorities should be. We're in the process of doing that, and I think that without consultation with our partners we're not going to be able to provide an exact, detailed list of what the top priorities are because, really, it's up to us working with First Nations to determine what those priorities are.

Mr. Rodney: I hear you, and I know that the government is new and that you're new. I just believe that Albertans deserve to have answers to those three questions in terms of each one of those priorities, so I will put in the formal request for a written response.

Further to that, your ministry's budget, it's been alluded to, has increased by 1.6 per cent. Can you please give all Albertans the details they deserve regarding what specific aspects of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report and the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples you're actually able to address in this budget year?

Further to that, how do you plan on holding in-depth consultations with the aboriginal community and developing crossministry implementation plans and executing those plans when Budget 2015 only increases your staff complement by six employees?

Ms Ganley: Am I supposed to answer now? Are we going back and forth?

The Chair: I'm not aware. The member has not indicated if he'd like to go back and forth.

Mr. Rodney: Oh, I'm very happy to go back and forth.

The Chair: Absolutely.

Ms Ganley: All right. I think there were a number of questions in there, but I'd start by addressing them.

Mr. Rodney: Well, in sum, it was TRC, UNDRIP, in-depth consultations, crossministry implementation plan, and execution of the plans with six employees. How exactly are you going to do that?

Ms Ganley: Well, I think it's important to point out that we don't have six employees; we have 235 employees.

Mr. Rodney: Additional. You only have six more people, and you plan on doing incredibly invaluable and lofty things. How can you do all of that with only six more employees?

Ms Ganley: Well, I don't think it's a matter of doing all of that with only six more employees. This department has been working very, very hard to work on these priorities, and I would submit that perhaps the previous government was a little bit inefficient.

Mr. Rodney: I'd be interested to see how your staff feel. I don't know about you, but I think Albertans are kind of tired of looking in the rear-view mirror, and they'd kind of like to look forward.

I'll go on to the next question.

Ms Ganley: Well, I think we are looking forward . . .

Mr. Rodney: Good. Great.

Ms Ganley: So if you'd give me a chance to address those questions. I mean, you're the one who alluded to the difference in the staffing in the past. I'm not the one who's wanting to look backwards here.

Mr. Rodney: I'm here to collaborate and move forward for our aboriginal people, our Inuit friends, and our Métis friends, and I think they have a right to know if we are looking at the TRC report and UNDRIP and many consultations and crossministry implementation plans and execution of those plans. You only have an additional six people from last year. There are a lot of jobs there that are new because UNDRIP and the TRC have been recently released. All I'm saying is: have you equipped yourself enough to take care of all these important duties?

Ms Ganley: We have six additional positions budgeted for. In addition to those six positions budgeted for, we have added some positions. We are hiring people to fill vacancies. In addition, I have full confidence in this department and their abilities. I have confidence in their abilities to execute this work. We've been doing, I think, a fantastic job. We have already commenced those. Each individual ministry has been reviewing their own portfolio, so that's work that's done by people in other departments. They will make submissions to Aboriginal Relations, and we comment on those submissions and send them back.

In terms of meetings with First Nations a lot of those meetings have occurred, yes, with staff present but also with myself present. Those meetings are moving forward. We are working in consultation with them, and we are hoping to have that initial report, that sort of outlines some basics in areas where the UN declaration can be better implemented in ministries by February. Then we will be working with our indigenous partners to determine sort of where

to work first and where to focus first. A lot of the cost of that implementation is going to be borne by various departments, so as the departments go through and discover that there's sort of a difference in terms of education or that there's a difference in terms of health care, those departments will be working on initiatives. Essentially, Aboriginal Relations is acting as sort of a co-ordination shop for all that work to happen.

10:30

Mr. Rodney: Speaking of that – sorry; this was never meant to trap at all. We're doing this for the people of Alberta. Why was the priority to have Aboriginal Relations lead initiatives relating to aboriginal peoples removed from last year's business plan? Why would this ministry not lead and collaborate in the major initiatives it plans to start implementing this year?

Ms Ganley: We are leading and collaborating in the major initiatives.

Mr. Rodney: It's not in your business plan. It was last year. It's not this year. Why?

Ms Ganley: I'm sorry; is your concern that we worded the business plan differently?

Mr. Rodney: In your business plan it does not say that you will lead the initiatives.

Ms Ganley: Under priority initiative 1.1: "Lead the government in enhancing collaboration and ongoing dialogue with First Nations to achieve progress in mutually identified areas."

Mr. Rodney: Okay. Let's move on to question 4. Your ministry is almost doubling the communications funding from \$331,000 to \$642,000. That was mentioned earlier. Thank you for that. At the same time you're cutting back on the aboriginal consultation office from \$117,000 to \$92,000. Now, if consulting and developing new relationships with aboriginal peoples is so important to this government, why are you taking money out of consultation and, instead, directing it to communications? Minister, it appears that this government is much more interested in one-way communications rather than in collaborating and consulting, which, to me, would mean listening. Can you explain why that one is going way up and the other one is coming down? It seems backwards to me.

Ms Ganley: Again, the budget for communications is identical to the budget last year, so that's not an increase in anything.

Mr. Rodney: But not the actuals. It's half.

Ms Ganley: Well, we don't have actuals this year yet, so we can't compare actuals to actuals.

Mr. Rodney: Why would you spend more than \$300,000 extra on communications, which can be one-way, and decrease the amount on consultation?

Ms Ganley: If you'd let me answer the question, I might be able to answer it for you.

Mr. Rodney: I'd like that a lot.

Ms Ganley: Okay. Well, stop talking, then.

Mr. Rodney: Let's be direct, shall we?

Mr. McIver: Whoa. Point of order. That's out of line there, Chair.

Ms Ganley: If you'd like me to answer the question, I will be happy to answer the question. The communications budget line is identical to what it was last year. In terms of the actuals my understanding is that there were two people transferred from the Public Affairs Bureau when the government was reorganized that are now within my ministry.

In terms of the aboriginal consultation office I'm just going to have to get numbers on this if you'll just wait for just a second. It appears that the totals are down very slightly although, specifically, 6.2, the aboriginal consultation office, is up very slightly in terms of budget and up even more, as my friend pointed out, compared to the actuals.

Again, I think it's important to point out that we're talking about two types of consultation here. One type of consultation is small "c" consultation, which we also refer to as engagement because of, specifically, this confusion. That sort of engagement is us going out, visiting with First Nations, bringing them here to meet with the Premier, meeting with them on the UN declaration, that sort of thing. We're doing quite a lot of that, and we're doing, I think, a very good job. There's a lot of hope with this new government that we can move forward on that, so that's been just great, I think.

In terms of the consultation office, that is, again, big "c" legal consultation. That's consultation in terms of us regulating the relationship between industry proponents and First Nations.

Mr. Rodney: Thanks, Minister. You know, for the record, Madam Chair, I only get 20 minutes, as you know, and I will do what I have seen done many times by members of the opposition, and I will now read into the record the questions that I have, because there won't be time to answer them now. Here they go.

Priority 1.5 removes the term "education" as an area of mutual interest with the federal government. Why has it been removed, and are you no longer focusing on it in your discussion with the federal government?

The second question for written submission afterwards. The fiscal plan for education is set to increase to \$37 million in 2016-2017 from the \$9 million you've budgeted in 2015-2016, but there's no indication in the statement of operations about the planned uses of these funds. Can you please clarify the reason for this inconsistency and provide us with your specific plans for education?

The next question. There is an explicit absence of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit capital funding in the business plan, especially with regard to health and education infrastructure. For instance, NorQuest and NAIT are key education and training institutions serving the capital region in northern Alberta. Why is housing the only infrastructure need addressed by this ministry, and why are there no other capital funding projects in this plan for the needs of aboriginal peoples?

The next question, with respect to education priority 1.5. It appears to refer to Jordan's principle, and that's a good initiative. Can you please point out the business line that indicates how your government plans to implement this important principle, and why is the principle not explicitly named, that that's the commitment the government is making? Why not give respect and recognition to Jordan River Anderson, for whom this principle was named?

The next question. Aboriginal women's initiatives and research is to receive an increase of \$625,000 in Budget 2015. However, given the great emphasis on women's issues by this government, why is that not higher, and how exactly is your government going to utilize the funding?

The next question. While your business plan confirms your intention to consult on natural resources with First Nations, First

Nations management on water resources is absent from this initiative. How can you say that you're committed to consulting on natural resources when water isn't even part of the equation?

The next question. The business plan has made a departure to "indigenous communities" from the traditional "aboriginal communities." I have no qualms with that change in language; in fact, I support it. But since this change is so substantial and creates an inconsistency in the language of your ministry, why have you not renamed your ministry to "indigenous relations"?

Again, Chair, I respect that those questions can't be answered here and now. As I asked for the first question, I would ask that these, because this is such an important set of issues, be provided for all members. We've done this in the past, many times. Written responses given to all members would be much appreciated. I'd like to advise again that in the second section I am going to hand it over to our hon. PC interim leader – that's Ric McIver – because he has some very important questions as well.

But I note that I'm out of time, so I'm happy to pass it back to you and your caucus.

The Chair: Thank you very much, hon. member.

Regarding the point of order that Mr. McIver made at 10:32, we will be addressing it at the end of the meeting.

Mr. McIver: You know what, Chair? I'll withdraw that. It was just important to point out that the minister actually asked people that are here to ask her questions to stop talking. I thought that was worth mentioning out loud.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Ganley: I'm sorry. Since he gets to respond, do I?

Mr. McIver: I withdrew it.

The Chair: It's withdrawn; therefore, it's off the table.

I would ask now that we take the five-minute break that we agreed on at the beginning of this meeting. Please return at 10:43.

[The committee adjourned from 10:38 a.m. to 10:48 a.m.]

The Chair: I'd like to call the meeting back to order. Before we start, I would just like to remind all members that the parliamentary rules in this committee meeting are to be followed, and I would encourage you to be respectful in your communication.

I now would like to invite the representative of the Alberta Party to speak.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to thank the minister for her attendance here today, thank her staff and all participants here today. I want to recognize my tremendous researcher, Barb Currie, for all that she's done to help me prepare specifically for this committee and also for everything else she does. Barb, thank you for keeping me on top of things.

I will, once we get to it, Madam Chair, like to go back and forth with the minister if that's all right, but I'll start with a brief opening statement. I want to thank the minister and recognize the Premier and her government for taking a refreshing approach to Aboriginal Relations which goes beyond just simple economic considerations. While those considerations are important, what I see from this government is an attempt at partnership: working with, alongside, and not simply dictating to. I'm sincerely thankful for that approach.

Some of the examples of that were the apology, the sincere and heartfelt apology we heard from the Premier in the Assembly and for which most members rose to give the Premier a standing ovation

although not all, which I thought was noteworthy, and your call for an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, which I strongly support and note that our new federal government also supports. I look forward to that moving forward very quickly.

As opposition members we have a choice. We can choose to be hostile; we can choose to be helpful. Our role as opposition members is simply not to just oppose what the government does for the sake of opposition: if the government says black, we say white. It shouldn't work that way. It is good to ask questions – that is our job – but we should be doing that from the frame of ensuring that government works better. You know, those of you who have been on other committees with me know that I have not necessarily been gentle with the government on most files, but in this case I like what I see from Aboriginal Relations in general terms. I certainly have some questions, but I believe your approach is a good one.

I will say, of course, Minister, that you are accountable for your department, present, future, and past. I know you weren't there, but, you know, that is your job. So we will delve into some of those questions as well.

You know, having said that, if what had been done in the past worked so well, I guess I'd ask: why are we in the situation that we're in? Why do we still have significantly lower educational participation and achievement on-reserve and off? Why do we have a housing crisis? Why do we have a water crisis? Why do we have conflict over resource development? These are all very important issues that I know this ministry has grappled with over time, that Canadians across the country have grappled with over time. I think that in addressing those challenges, we do need a new approach, and what I see so far is at least the early stages of a new approach.

Given all of that I will move to my questions. There have been questions, then, about the desire to implement the UN declaration. I'm interested in knowing how you will measure your progress and how you will report that progress and how you will work with the federal government in areas that are crossjurisdictional or just, frankly, outside the jurisdiction of the province of Alberta.

Ms Ganley: In terms of moving forward with respect to the UN declaration, we are hoping to set some goals and some measures, but our intention is that once that initial cabinet report comes forward, we will work with our indigenous partners to determine sort of what those goals and benchmarks ought to be moving forward. I realize that's an approach that means that you don't have, necessarily, the goals at the outset. It has that downside to it, but I think the upside is that we can create the goals together so it's not a question of the government just sort of walking in and scoping what the outcomes and what the measures will be, because I don't know that I think that's the right way to approach it.

Mr. Clark: I agree absolutely on the process in terms of how those goals are arrived at and how that action plan is developed, but reporting what that is and being very clear about that, I think, is very important for the Assembly and all members of the Assembly and, through us, all Albertans to understand. So I guess I would encourage you to do that.

I think it's also important that we have timelines and when we'll see those, because otherwise these things can get lost. It's important work, and I think it is important that we have some clear time frames. I'd ask that you come up with those as quickly as possible.

Ms Ganley: Absolutely.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

Thinking about safe and clean drinking water on reserves, building facilities – and again I recognize that there are significant jurisdictional questions here between the provincial and federal

governments. But having said that, it is vitally important. To the degree that it is within the remit of the provincial government, what work have you done to ensure not only that facilities are in place but that training is in place as well as that system maintenance on an ongoing basis is in place, specifically for water infrastructure?

Ms Ganley: With respect to water infrastructure I concur that this is sort of a really fundamental thing, and I think that we absolutely need to ensure that people are getting clean drinking water. That's one of the reasons that there's a little bit of extra money to address critical infrastructure projects in terms of the Métis settlements as we understand they're working to prioritize those lists.

With respect to First Nations, you know, it is in federal jurisdiction, but we're trying to do our best to work with them to maybe find some creative solutions, and we are deeply hopeful that our new federal partners, who've expressed a dedication to the UN declaration as well, will be working with us to address those situations.

10:55

Mr. Clark: Thank you. Again, just an emphasis on training and maintenance being a very important part of that, just as a reminder.

Moving on to the estimates themselves, page 18, line 8.3. Looking at the Alberta flooding, there's increased cost for the flooding initiative's administrative capacity and support. I mean, we're two and a half years down the road from the flood. I'm just curious what your sense is of where we are on that and whether we're making progress and if there are timelines as to when we may be able to wrap this up.

Ms Ganley: That funding was sort of initially planned to be rolled out in a five-year arc to address damage from the 2013 floods, and of course this is a huge priority in the sense that, you know, it's very emotionally difficult and stressful and sort of generally bad for people to be displaced in this way.

Currently on Stoney Nakoda Nation 548 houses were impacted. Currently 128 full house repairs have been completed to provincial standard. Three houses have been replaced, and 1,028 flood evacuees have been returned to their repaired homes. Obviously, there is some ongoing work happening with respect to that.

Siksika Nation was also impacted. They had 136 houses impacted. The government has partnered with Siksika Nation to build capacity within the nation, so they're actually acting as the project manager on that project. As I understand it, 57 of those houses are currently in various stages of rebuild. We've started the stage 1 and 2 houses, and then stage 3 will come in the future, so that, I guess, funding will continue to roll out over the five-year time frame.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Do you have any numbers on how many families are still displaced, having to stay with relatives or in other accommodation?

Ms Ganley: I don't think we have the numbers with us, but we can undertake to get back to you on that.

Mr. Clark: Thank you.

Then flipping to page 19, section 8.1: some pretty significant differences between what was budgeted and what was actually spent in 2014-15, and then the estimate for 2015-16 is again a significant amount of money. Can you just speak to why the actuals were only \$3.8 million on a budget of \$96.1 million from 2014-15?

Ms Ganley: Again, I wasn't around, but my understanding is that essentially the projects didn't move forward quite as quickly as had

been hoped, so that funding will be rolled forward into future years. We still need to spend the money to rebuild the houses; it's just a question of which year it's allocated to. As I understand it, not as much work was done in that year as had been hoped.

Mr. Clark: Do you have any insights as to – I mean, that's a very significant difference, a very, very significant difference. Do you have any commentary on why that is and on what your department is doing to address those problems going forward?

Ms Ganley: Sorry. What we're doing to address the problems . . .

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Sorry, I'll ask that again.

Ms Ganley: Sorry.

Mr. Clark: No, I understand. So \$96 million down to \$3 million is a very significant difference in terms of not being able to deploy those funds. "Why?" would be the short question, and then: what is your department doing to ensure that that problem is addressed and does not continue on into the future?

Ms Ganley: Apparently, I am given to understand that we recognized the liability at the beginning of the program, so it's just a matter of drawdown over the course of that project. So about \$184 million has been paid out on that to the end of March 2015. I mean, it appears that we're rolling forward with the rebuild. I understand that, obviously, it's really critical for people to move forward on this, and we are working with the nations on moving forward on this. I understand that the Stoney projects are – I think I just gave the numbers in terms of how far they've moved forward, and we're working with them to ensure that they can sort of keep moving forward to get people back into their homes.

Mr. Clark: I guess that if that is the case, that the money has been rolled out and you're drawing down, I mean, that's some very odd accounting. I'm not familiar with that being generally accepted accounting.

Ms Ganley: Apparently, liability retirement is a requirement of Treasury Board and Finance. The accounting was changed because the Auditor General had made some comments, shall we say, about the previous accounting, so we brought it in line with sort of general accounting.

Mr. Clark: Okay. That was my next question, whether perhaps we would have asked the Auditor General to weigh in on this one. It sounds like that he has, so I'll move on, then.

You referenced the disaster recovery program as part of the cost recovery and work with the federal government. Do you have any sense of how much of this money will be recovered through DRP, any status update on that?

Ms Ganley: We're estimating that we'll be looking somewhere between up to a hundred per cent and almost certainly more than 60 per cent. It's quite an arduous process to apply to the DRP. We sort of apply and submit all of this information, and then they determine on a go-forward basis what's going on there. We had also made some commitments to do some additional repairs to some of those houses. In some cases, we'd be repairing flood damage in the basement and there'd be a hole in the roof. So that hole in the roof is probably not going to qualify federally, but we thought that if we were repairing the house, we should repair that, too. So we may not recover a hundred per cent of it.

Mr. Clark: As the representative of Calgary-Elbow I can tell you about DRP.

I'm curious. Given the exact scenario that you talked about, have you explored other mechanisms beyond DRP to recover some dollars from the federal government?

Ms Ganley: We have been working directly through Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, and they have been working with us.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Good to know. Thank you.

Switching gears, then, to Advanced Education, there are a couple of very interesting projects. I recognize that within postsecondary the Minister of Advanced Education would probably – this may fall under her area. There are a couple of initiatives at two universities in Alberta for First Nations students who leave their homes, their support systems, their cultural context and have a difficult time working through that, which has a significant impact on their educational outcome and their ability to complete their degrees. So the University of Alberta through their Faculty of Native Studies has been working to increase engagement across cultural knowledge and reconciliation. They're looking for support for the Maskwa House of Learning. I'm curious: will you be working with other ministries to support the Maskwa House, that project in particular?

Ms Ganley: The University of Alberta did approach me, I think sometime in the last month, with this proposal, and it looks like a really great idea, so we have been looking over their proposal. I think the goals are definitely very laudable. It's a great project, and we will be working through our friends at Infrastructure. Of course, this government has committed to openly prioritizing which infrastructure projects are going to get funding, so we will be working with Infrastructure through that process to determine where that falls.

11:05

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Again, I think it's a very important project, and I certainly encourage you to support it to the best of your ability.

Another project. Mount Royal University is looking to build longer term aboriginal housing on campus given their proximity to the Tsuut'ina Nation. This is something that I know has been in the works for some time. It feels like one of those quick wins, where we can increase aboriginal participation and success in postsecondary through long-term housing. I'm curious, one, if you're aware of that project and, two, what your department can do to support it.

Ms Ganley: We have been made aware of that particular project, and I actually think the aims are very interesting. As I understand it, the project is intended to create housing so that the students can live year-round in the housing. They're not going back and forth, so you don't see that sort of rate of attrition over the summer. I think it's a really good idea.

In terms of supporting it, I think we received the proposal in the last couple of weeks, and we're working with our partners in Advanced Education and Infrastructure to look into that. Again, the goals are fantastic.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

I'll move on. I realize we're running out of time here. I want to talk about fentanyl on-reserve in particular. Recently the Blood reserve lost 16 members to overdose, which is an absolute tragedy, the higher crime and the social impact that comes from losing, in particular, so many young people. I'm concerned that the existing strategies through Health may not work given their apparent lack of cultural context. I'm curious about what your department will do to

ensure that any fentanyl strategy is culturally driven, created in consultation with or by First Nations health professionals.

Ms Ganley: I think we're certainly all aware that the situation with respect to fentanyl is an absolute tragedy. I understand that the Department of Health is working on a number of initiatives, and as you're aware, the mental health review has been undertaken as well. With respect to cultural sensitivity, we certainly will be working with them to assist in that piece. I'm not sure specifically what it is you're referencing in terms of a lack of cultural sensitivity.

Mr. Clark: Well, I guess I flag that as an issue. I think that as the strategies are developed through Health, I would hope that one of the roles for Aboriginal Relations is to ensure that perhaps you even inject yourself into that discussion and not necessarily wait to be asked. I think this is a very important issue. Specifically, will you ensure that fentanyl antidote take-home kits are available on-reserve as well?

Ms Ganley: We absolutely will be working with Health on this issue.

With respect to the availability of fentanyl antidote kits on-reserve, I can undertake to get back to the member on what we're doing with respect to that. I know there are some rules around them, but Health is taking great strides to make those more widely available, so I will find out if they are available right now.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: Thank you, Member.

I would now like to invite members from government caucus to speak and would inquire if they are requesting to go back and forth with the minister.

Mr. Horne: Thank you. Yes, I would like to go back and forth with the minister as well as Calgary-Glenmore, I believe. Yes.

Thus far I've been quite happy with the new tone in Aboriginal Relations. In particular, both myself and my constituents were extremely happy to hear that this government is committed to implementing the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and are anxiously waiting to see the integration of this policy into each and every department. I think we all want to be able to assure our constituents that we're getting this right. My first question to the minister today: how does this budget ensure that the government implements it?

Ms Ganley: Well, included in this budget – it's a little bit complicated compared to last year because they took a 5 per cent cut in the previous government's budget, and then there was some increased funding in this budget. The intention of that funding is to provide some capacity support to indigenous groups so that they can make some submissions to the government because sometimes their way of knowing and our way of knowing are not perfectly identical. We need some technical experts to make sure that we can integrate those two things so that we're really hearing those voices. So it certainly supports that. It also will go to support some initiatives with indigenous women to ensure that, you know, we address those underlying causes of vulnerability, particularly poverty, that sort of thing. So we are going forward with that. So, yeah, that capacity funding will help us to hear their voices.

Mr. Horne: Okay. How have you seen the implementation of UNDRIP impacting government relations with indigenous people so far, and can you point to any specific examples?

Ms Ganley: Certainly, in terms of the meetings I've been having with indigenous groups, they're thrilled to hear that we plan to work on this. People are very, very hopeful, and that's why I'm so happy that we were able to move forward on this project right now because I think there is a real opportunity at this moment in time in terms of moving forward.

Thus far I think that our main goal has been to listen to our indigenous partners to hear what their views are on sort of how to implement the UN declaration, and that process has been going very well. A number of issues have been brought forward, and I think we're making some good progress on ensuring that that relationship is healthy going forward.

Ms Kazim: First of all, I'd like to thank you for your time. Hon. minister, my question is about the Lubicon. The Lubicon struggled for decades with the previous government trying to resolve their land claim. What is the status of that land claim, and what recent steps have been taken to ensure that it is completed?

Ms Ganley: The process of negotiation was ongoing. It requires a negotiator from the Lubicon, a provincial negotiator, and a federal negotiator. That had sort of been on pause during the rather long federal election campaign period. Actually, those negotiations have already resumed. Our Premier raised this issue in her very first conversation with the new Prime Minister, and I think about a week ago we got word that those negotiations have resumed. I think we're very, very close to a deal. The land that we're talking about is largely unencumbered, so it's just a matter of working out the details, and I think that within the next year we can see a closure to this issue.

Ms Kazim: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Horne: You signed a letter of intent to support the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council in August. What support might be available in this budget for the council?

Ms Ganley: In terms of that specific project, it's to sort of support their educational goals. A lot of that will come ultimately through Education, and Aboriginal Relations is mostly working in conjunction with Education and with the five bands that are involved in that. One of those bands is the Lubicon, so part of this will interact with the building of their schools. Their hope is to create a space where they can start to close that gap, and I think it's a very laudable goal. We have been working closely with them and with the hon. Minister of Education and our partners in Education.

Ms Kazim: Okay. The minister's office spent about \$6,400 on travel in September. Where did those funds go, and what type of travel has the office been doing?

Ms Ganley: We've actually done a significant amount of travel. We have been to all areas of the province. Of course, many First Nations are somewhat inaccessible. For instance, I think of Fort Chipewyan; that would be a location we would fly into. They only have a road in the winter, so it's only accessible by boat or by plane. We think that that is money well spent because what we've certainly been hearing from First Nations is that when they come forward and talk to us about their issues in terms of things that are happening on-reserve or things that are happening environmentally in their traditional territories, they want us to come out there and meet them where they live and see what they're experiencing. So I think that that is, in my opinion, money well spent.

11:15

Ms Kazim: Great. So what plans do you have for community visits in the future?

Ms Ganley: I mean, obviously, during session I won't be doing a lot of community visits, but we haven't made it around to all of the nations or all of the settlements yet, so we will be continuing to move forward with those community visits.

Ms Kazim: Okay. My next question. In October your office co-ordinated meetings between the Premier, treaty organizations, and First Nations. What topics were raised at those meetings?

Ms Ganley: Well, a number of topics were raised at those meetings, some specific to First Nations. I would say that the sort of general theme was that there is an unhappiness, I think, with the consultation policy, so that's certainly something we're looking into. Economic development was also a really big common theme, that we'll be working on going forward. In addition, health and education were big areas or topics of conversation and children in care. So those are some of the big concerns. I mean, obviously, there are lots of other concerns that we heard sort of over and over again, but I think that, ultimately, really what we're talking about is closing the gap economically in terms of education and health care to ensure that all Albertans benefit from the prosperous economy in this province.

Ms Kazim: What are the next steps moving forward?

Ms Ganley: Going forward, we are working with the treaty organizations because they've told us that that's how they prefer to be organized. There was previously a situation where all of the First Nations got together at once, and they've been telling us that they didn't really like that. They didn't think that it was particularly productive. So we're organizing by treaty area, and we're hoping to implement some relationship agreements so that we can create a way to interact and set some common goals and make sure that everyone has access to different ministers so that they can pursue their aims going forward.

In terms of the UN declaration we're looking to bring forward an initial cabinet report in February that will outline areas where we can try to move the ball forward.

Ms Kazim: Okay. The minister and the Premier have committed to ensuring that we continue to work with First Nations on a government-to-government basis to address matters of mutual interest. When it comes to land and natural resources development, how are you including and consulting with First Nations governments on these important issues?

Ms Ganley: Right now one of the big pieces, I think, is going to be in terms of addressing that consultation policy to make sure that it is more responsive to the needs of First Nations. We are working with them in a number of ways. Some First Nations have expressed some concern with the way that we were going to proceed, which was this sort of geodata mapping system, so we're hearing from them other suggestions on how to sort of scope when it is that a project proponent needs to consult with a particular First Nation. We're also working in terms of sort of managing cumulative effects, if you will, and working on comanagement of certain areas that are very important.

Ms Kazim: Okay. As we are trying to move away from a single-source economy, can you please speak to how this budget supports

and engages indigenous Albertans in our goal of a diversified economy?

Ms Ganley: First Nations are actually extremely industrious and extremely interested in participating more fully in the economy not only in terms of training and working with the energy industry, which we need to support, but also in terms of new projects, so we're working with them on some feasibility studies. Projects that have been brought forward include large greenhouses to provide local food. A lot of local First Nations are really interested in working with solar power because they have a lot of sun in their areas. Those are just a few of the initiatives that we've been working on.

Ms Kazim: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Horne: You recently mentioned a report on reducing the number of indigenous youth in care, due out in February. I know it impacts a lot of families. I know it's impacted mine. I believe that this was one of the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Can you provide some information on that report?

Ms Ganley: Well, that report, as I understand, will be coming forward through the Ministry of Human Services. We will be working with them and with our First Nations partners to try to get those voices heard because, of course, there's an interesting sort of balance here, right? You know, we absolutely need to protect children, and in fact we have a duty to do so. But we also need to recognize that the way we do that currently is perceived by First Nations as – well, we are removing children from their community and placing them in other homes outside their community. So I think we're going to need to look at some creative solutions on how we can support families to support children, to keep children in those communities rather than removing them from those communities.

But I understand that that report will be coming forward through Human Services, and then I will be working with the minister of that department to try to come up with some creative solutions to address the situation.

Ms Kazim: Another one of the ministry's priority initiatives is to co-ordinate with other ministries to explore the development of a consolidated government report on indigenous statistics to help enhance awareness and understanding of indigenous issues. How will the creation of this report lead to better policies and supports across the board for indigenous Albertans?

Ms Ganley: Well, I think it's really important to understand where we are now in order to understand how best to measure whether we're moving forward in the future. So the intention there is to get information on current outcomes so that we know that this is the current situation and we know whether we're actually moving the ball forward in terms of improving. I mean, certainly, we have some statistics now, and they indicate a significant gap. The more information we have, the better we can do.

Mr. Horne: Your ministry also operates the First Nations development fund. Can you describe how the development fund is funded and how those funds are used?

Ms Ganley: The First Nations development fund flows through funding from casinos. The money comes in, obviously, from lottery revenues. Then what happens is that First Nations make proposals, grant proposals, and they're administered through our department

and sort of overseen. For the most part we're working with them to support what their goals are, so for the most part those projects tend to proceed forward.

Mr. Horne: Okay. As I've said in the House before, I'm a member of the Métis Nation. I also keep a keen eye on Supreme Court decisions, and I am particularly interested in the Daniels and Canada case. It was recently heard by the Supreme Court of Canada and, as you've alluded to, has the possibility of finding that Métis people fall under federal jurisdiction. How might that impact Alberta, and how does this budget respond to that?

Ms Ganley: Well, in terms of responding in terms of the impact on Alberta, I think the concern would be that if Métis people are under federal jurisdiction, there is some legislation that we have that kind of creates the Métis settlements, if you will, that potentially would turn out to be ultra vires. So our intention now – and we've just today found out who our federal counterparts will be – is to reach out to the federal government. We're hoping to set up a meeting with them. In fact, I had a recent meeting with the Métis settlements, and they've indicated that the way they want to proceed is to sort of have the three parties at the table and kind of work out a plan going forward. I mean, our interest is, obviously, to make sure that the land that they have is protected.

Mr. Horne: Okay. That's great to hear. I was also pleased to see a record turnout of MLAs at the Métis Nations general council this year, including almost a third of cabinet. There was more than one party represented. It was great. The previous government, unfortunately, had let the relationship with the Métis people falter. So how is this government working to renew the relationship with the Métis Nation of Alberta Association?

11:25

Ms Ganley: We've had, actually, several meetings with the Métis Nation, and we've been working with them on a number of issues. Certainly, in terms of going forward, we're sort of listening to what their concerns are. I mean, of course, they have a number of concerns, too, in terms of relative outcomes in their population in terms of education, socioeconomics, health care, that sort of thing. We have been working with them. We have had a number of meetings, including one to discuss specifically the UN declaration, and I think we've gotten some good take-aways from that.

Mr. Horne: Okay. I know that health care and education in particular are huge files for the Métis.

You've alluded to this already a bit, but I'm hoping to get a bit more information. How has the province been working with the Métis settlements on developing a consultation policy, and what is the status of that policy?

Ms Ganley: I had the opportunity to meet with the Métis settlements council just recently, and they have told us that they are happy with the consultation policy that has been developed. So we are proceeding to the next step, and that next step is to sort of outline the traditional territory that we're talking about. The consultation policy itself, in terms of how it's going to work, has been developed. They have indicated that that's sort of a first step. Once we implement the policy, you know, we will want some back and forth to see how it's working for everyone. Right now we've moved on, and we're going to be working with them to designate traditional territory areas so that we know what land we're talking about.

Mr. Horne: To the best of my knowledge, I'm the only member of the Métis Nation represented in this Legislature. This follows an

unfortunate trend that all indigenous people are underrepresented both in politics and in industry, and my understanding is that this government is trying to help remedy that. What is Aboriginal Relations doing to increase the economic participation of aboriginal peoples?

Ms Ganley: In terms of economic participation we issue a number of grants that go to support both training and education to integrate into the workforce and specific business and entrepreneurial initiatives to kind of grow the economy. Specifically in terms of representation I know that my colleague in the Ministry of Health has been reaching out to First Nations to get some indigenous voices on the AHS Board. Our hope going forward is to sort of shift that both in terms of, you know, representation in government and in terms of economic development.

Mr. Horne: Okay. My constituency also includes the Alexander First Nation, and I know you've met with them at least once. I know that the Premier has met with them as well. One of the things I continuously hear from my constituents is that they want this government to repeal Bill 22, the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Act, which was introduced and enacted by the previous government without any meaningful consultation with aboriginal groups and stakeholders. I've heard some complaints from industry even on that. Can the minister speak to the current status of that repeal?

Ms Ganley: Bill 22, the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Act, has suffered a large amount of criticism. It has been criticized by indigenous groups and also by industry.

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, Minister. This portion is concluded.

I would now like to invite the Official Opposition to enter into their speaking time, and we are now at the 10-minute speaking time.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Minister, while the previous questioning was quite entertaining, it didn't stick very much to any budget items, which is a concern to me.

This is my third estimate in three days, and I'm quite worried about some of the accounting processes, the risky accounting strategies that I'm seeing here. You know, I'll go back to the Finance minister's saying just in September that all or most of the ministries were going to be held to a zero increase. We've seen as high as 43 per cent on some budget increases. It's kind of crazy.

Then I'm very troubled by the practice of basing estimates on previous budgets, knowing full well that the money was never spent. You wouldn't do that in a business. I have a problem with the suggestion that we're going to do that with Albertans' money, so I'd like that to go on the record, please.

You brought up the UNDRIP. I wasn't going to go there, but I'll have to ask you now: what are your priorities based on what you can actually do as a province, considering that most if not all of the issues are already covered by the Canadian Constitution? Which of the 80-plus recommendations do you actually think you can impact, and in which line items do you intend to implement them?

We'll go back and forth, please, and then I will defer to two of my colleagues as well. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Ganley: So there were a number of questions in there. I don't want to speak to the budgets of other ministers, but this budget overall, in terms of estimates last year to estimates this year, has had a decrease. There was a more substantial decrease in the

previous government's budget, and then some of that funding was returned by this government.

In terms of our priorities we were hoping to develop our priorities in consultation with First Nations. The priorities that I'm hearing from them are economic development; land, air, and water; health care; education; sort of essentially closing that gap. Those are the priorities that we'll be focusing on throughout the government.

Mr. Hanson: So those are addressed in those 80-plus recommendations that we're referring to, in the UNDRIP?

Ms Ganley: Sorry. Are you talking about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations or the UN declaration?

Mr. Hanson: The UN declaration.

Ms Ganley: There are 46 articles in the UN declaration.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. There are lots there. But again my question is that most of those were addressed in the Canadian Constitution already. As a province do you have something specific that you're going to go after to address there, and, again, in which line item do you intend on addressing that?

Ms Ganley: Well, I'm not sure that the Constitution speaks directly to the UN declaration. Certainly, the Constitution does say that for the most part indigenous peoples fall under the federal government. But I think, you know, we're still occupying the same space, so we can still work together on a number of issues, and the provincial government certainly is responsible for dealing with regulation in terms of economic development and environmental impact. Certainly, in terms of their traditional territories we have a pretty big impact and, I think, a pretty big role to play. I think that just saying, "Well, it's our federal government counterpart that is responsible for this" in instances where sometimes you're talking about people on-reserve who don't have access to clean drinking water is probably a little bit insufficient.

Mr. Hanson: I understand that. But your government keeps bringing this up, and what I'm asking you is: being that you do keep bringing that up, is there something specific that you're going to address, and under which line item in this budget are you going to address it?

Ms Ganley: Well, in terms of things that are specific that we're going to address, we're addressing all of the UN declaration, so all of the ministers are going through their portfolios right now looking for ways to implement that. I think that a lot of it has to do with respect, which is, you know, free. Moving forward, once we develop a sort of scoping of what issues we have and of places where we can move the ball and we've talked to our First Nations partners about how they would like to move that ball, I think we'll probably have a better understanding.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you very much, Minister.

I'm going to defer to Mrs. Aheer for questions.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Minister, and thank you to your staff for being here. This is with regard to aboriginal women's initiatives. We're glad to see this increase of 32 per cent in the budget. But as mentioned quite rapidly by the hon. member from the third party, it's one of the smallest line items in the estimates, line 3 on page 18. How did you create this number, and did you base it on the actuals?

Ms Ganley: Part of that increase was as a result of the funding we secured recently. Specifically, there was an internal funding

reassignment to address priorities, of which this is obviously one, so that was an increase of \$133,000. In addition, there was new funding sought in the budgeting process, and that's about \$125,000 in this year, and it will increase next year. The new funding is to meet federal-provincial-territorial commitments stemming from the national round-table on missing and murdered indigenous women and also to develop a socioeconomic action plan for indigenous women so that we're sure that we're addressing those underlying root causes of vulnerability.

11:35

Mrs. Aheer: It's very important, and it's quite small in the grand scheme of things as to allocations in the estimates.

Just one other question if you don't mind. You had mentioned that there are no goals at the outset with regard to your collaborations, but you've mentioned on several occasions that you're trying to set goals with regard to being collaborative with indigenous peoples. You also mentioned in your opening comments that there are critical gaps in the interactions, which I couldn't agree with more. How do you bridge these critical gaps without some types of goals for the ministry and indigenous peoples at the outset?

Ms Ganley: Yeah. I apologize. I think I probably misstated that a little bit. I mean, ultimately, our goal would be to close that gap, to close that education, health care, economic gap completely. Obviously, that's sort of a more long-term goal, so we need to work together with our partners to develop some more short-term goals on how to best achieve that long-term goal.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Minister.

Just to go on that a little bit further, with regard to the gaps, then, just a suggestion that it might be worth while to make sure that you understand what is going on within the other ministries with regard to those collaborations because, I think, then the questions that we're asking will have a lot more impact, at least for us to understand where you're coming from.

Thank you.

Ms Ganley: Sure. Thanks.

Mrs. Aheer: I'd like to defer to Mr. Loewen, please. Thank you.

Mr. Loewen: I'd like to start with saying thanks to the minister and staff for being here today.

I want to bring your attention back to line 4 in the budget, in particular where it says \$128,774,000 for the First Nations development fund. Do you have that, Minister?

Ms Ganley: Yeah. Line 4, right? First Nations development fund.

Mr. Loewen: That's right, yes.

Ms Ganley: It's budgeted at \$128 million in the estimates this year.

Mr. Loewen: That's right. Now, on the \$128,774,000 that was spent last year I just want to get clarification. It's my understanding – and correct me if I'm wrong – that there were 41 initiatives that were funded by that program.

Ms Ganley: No. Those 41 initiatives are the economic development initiatives. Those are initiatives funded through grant funding through my department. The First Nations development fund is flow-through casino funding. So those will be different grant projects.

Mr. Loewen: Okay. Great. Thanks for that clarification.

How many initiatives were funded by this \$128,774,000?

Ms Ganley: I don't think we have the numbers in front of us. We can get back to you with the exact number.

Mr. Loewen: If you could table the result, that would be great.

Do we know kind of the range of each project or initiative that was expensed?

Ms Ganley: I have three examples in front of me. We had \$372,000 to support a housing development project on Cold Lake First Nation, \$135,000 to support the creation of a new daycare and preschool education care facility on the Woodland Cree First Nation, and \$1,790,000 to support the Blood Tribe's multipurpose centre, phase 2. Those are some examples of the grants.

Mr. Loewen: Those sound great. Thank you very much.

Could we also have tabled kind of a list of the projects and the cost of each one, then?

Ms Ganley: Yeah.

Mr. Loewen: That sounds great. Thanks.

I know this program is well intentioned – and I want to make that very clear – but we need to be sure that these funds are providing positive results for the people that they're intended for. Is there any kind of assessment of this program?

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, but this portion has been concluded.

I would like to now invite the third-party opposition to speak for their 10 minutes and inquire if they will be going back and forth.

Mr. McIver: Back and forth, please, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Minister, I've been trying to listen carefully, and what I think I heard – I'm happy for you to correct me – when the Wildrose was asking questions is that you don't know what happened before you were in government. Then in responses to my colleague from the PC Party and the NDs you seem to have extensive knowledge. So I guess I need clarification. What do you know about what happened before you were minister?

Ms Ganley: Well, obviously, I'll be aware of the things that had been going on in my department, and in order to understand things that are going on currently, it's necessary for me to develop some knowledge, but most of that will be paper-based knowledge. So I don't have first-hand knowledge. It's information that other people have reported to me.

Mr. McIver: That's a good clarification. Thank you.

Minister, you answered a question from your colleague from Calgary-Glenmore about the single-source economy. Do you remember that? What is the single-source economy, please? What single source?

Ms Ganley: Well, I mean, I don't want to speak for my colleague, but my understanding is that it was intended to be a reference to the fact that Alberta is quite reliant on the energy economy, which is obviously a fantastic, enormous driver of our economy, and we absolutely need to support that industry. But given that the price of oil tends to fluctuate, I think it's important that we diversify. I think that's where she was going.

Mr. McIver: Okay. So energy is the single source of the economy is what I think I heard.

Ms Ganley: Well, I'm only speculating. I don't actually want to speak for my colleague, but I would guess . . .

Mr. McIver: I'm asking you to speak for yourself, not for your colleague, please.

Ms Ganley: Well, I didn't reference the single-source economy, so I can't really speak to what could be meant by that term.

Mr. McIver: I know. But you answered a question like you seemed to understand what it was, so I was wondering what your understanding was.

Ms Ganley: Well, I answered that question on the basis of what I understood her to be saying, and what I understood her to be saying was that, you know, in addition to supporting the energy economy, we should also diversify the economy.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Thank you.

Now, there's a lot in your budget documents about being closer to First Nations and aboriginal peoples. You've got the treaty 6, 7, and 8 organizations that come between you and the aboriginal peoples, so how do you see being closer to them while working with those organizations, which in some cases do very good work?

Ms Ganley: Well, we work with those organizations to arrange meetings. When I say that we had a meeting between the Premier and the Treaty 6 chiefs, it's not just the organization; all of the chiefs were invited. The same thing with Treaty 7 and Treaty 8. In some cases they send proxies because they, obviously, sometimes have other things that they're doing. They're very busy people. But, yeah, those meetings are not just with the treaty organization; they are with all of the chiefs from that treaty area.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Now, as you know, the southwest part of Calgary's ring road is going through Tsuut'ina land. Are you going to kind of keep an eye on that to protect the Tsuut'ina's side of the rights in that agreement that was signed?

Ms Ganley: Well, obviously, that's working through the Ministry of Transportation, so they will be the lead on that particular project.

Mr. McIver: I appreciate that. But you're the aboriginal affairs minister, so I just wondered whether you're going to make some effort to make sure that they get what they're supposed to get.

Ms Ganley: Well, absolutely. We've had several meetings already. I've been out to meet the Tsuut'ina at their land, and they've also come to a number of meetings with our government. We're certainly listening for concerns. They haven't expressed any yet, but if the hon. member has heard some, I welcome him to bring them forward.

Mr. McIver: Well, one of the things that was talked about – and it's not an obligation, to be clear; I don't want to mislead you on that – was that they'd have an opportunity to provide a lead contractor to build the project if it could be done at the same or a lesser price than the government could provide. Are you going to work with your Transportation minister to see that they get that opportunity?

Ms Ganley: We have made the Minister of Transportation aware of that situation, and I can't tell you how he's responded to it. You might best direct that to him.

Mr. McIver: Okay. As you may or may not know, with the Stoney Nation west of Cochrane there on highway 1A an agreement was made to provide for the widening of that road. Of course, one of the

big beneficiaries of that will be the Stoney Nation themselves because they are probably most involved in accident vehicle collisions, either pedestrian-vehicle or two-vehicle collisions there. So are you, again, going to work with the Transportation minister to see that that road is built for the safety of the nation west of Cochrane?

Ms Ganley: I have had the opportunity to go out to the Stoney Nation and to see the road in question. In fact, that was an issue that they themselves raised. We have brought that issue to the attention of the Ministry of Transportation, and we will be working with them.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Thank you.

Now, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has 94 calls to action. Can you specify which of these calls to action are funded in the estimates that you are presenting here?

Ms Ganley: Well, obviously, it would take me a long time to address all 94.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Well, let me make it easier. Is call to action 43 addressed?

Ms Ganley: I don't have the document in front of me. Could you tell me what you're referencing?

Mr. McIver: Forty-three is, "We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," which is a centrepiece of your government's forward plans. I'm a little surprised that you don't know that one. So that's the one. Which line item of your budget is that represented on, please?

11:45

Ms Ganley: Yes. We are moving forward to address the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. In terms of the increased funding specifically for this issue we are on lines 2.1, 3, 6.2, and 6.3.

Mr. McIver: Thank you.

Which line items of your budget fund the departmental building of professional and cultural competencies that are required to facilitate crossministry collaboration?

Ms Ganley: I'm sorry. Can you say that again?

Mr. McIver: Which line items of your budget are going to help build the professional and cultural competencies that are required to facilitate crossministry collaboration with First Nations and Métis people?

Ms Ganley: Well, I think that we do best to learn from First Nations and Métis people themselves. We don't have a line item in terms of bringing in specific people. What we intend to do is to go out to the communities and to listen to those people and to hear what their ideas are. Hopefully, by learning from them, we can develop those competencies.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Article 18 of the declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples: how are you going to defend that, including indigenous peoples in decision-making, when your government's appointments to committees and boards this summer, that your government has done – you haven't, as I can tell, included any First Nations, Métis, or Inuit people on those boards that you have appointed.

Ms Ganley: Well, I don't want to speak to any one, specific board. I do know that we have been working with ministers in various departments to identify areas, but in terms of the specific boards I think you'd have to ask the ministers in charge of each individual one.

Mr. McIver: Well, I guess, my question is: are you going to address the fact that none have been appointed so far?

Ms Ganley: Well, I'm not necessarily aware that the premise of that question is correct, but, yes, we will be working with the departments going forward to identify people who can bring those voices to various areas of government.

Mr. McIver: Okay. How's your department addressing call to action 33? Let me help you.

We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to recognize as a high priority the need to address and prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and to develop, in collaboration with Aboriginal people, FASD preventive programs that can be delivered in a culturally appropriate manner.

Again, I am kind of reading to you the centrepieces of your government's policy because you don't know them.

Ms Ganley: Because I don't happen to have the document in front of me and I don't want to speak without being sure that I'm speaking to exactly what you're referencing: I mean, yeah, I think that's a pretty reasonable position for me to take.

In terms of what we're doing there, we do have a crossministry team working specifically on this. Human Services, as I understand, are the lead, but we're also working with our partners in Health.

Mr. McIver: Okay. There are 18 calls to action in the truth and reconciliation report that have explicit provincial responsibilities. Do you have those funded? Do you know which ones they are, and have you looked at them, and have you funded them, since you've had six months to look at this stuff?

Ms Ganley: Mainly what we're working with is using the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples as a means of reconciliation, which was in fact recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We are working with our indigenous partners to address all of those recommendations moving forward. In terms of talking about specific line items, I mean, a lot of those things have to do with respect and have to do with working with people, and respecting someone doesn't cost any money.

Mr. McIver: Okay. But there are 18 call-to-action items, so let me make it a little easier for you. Have you actually looked to see what the 18 items are that you are responsible for, and have you funded the activities that you'll have to do?

Ms Ganley: Yes, we have looked through both the UN declaration and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and we have been ...

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption. We've run out of time for this portion.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Minister. Thanks, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

As there's no independent or other representative from any other party present, we will move on to the government caucus. I invite you to enter into your 10-minute portion of speaking and inquire if you're going to be sharing your time with the minister.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Chair. I would like to split my time with the minister and, I believe, the Member for Calgary-Glenmore as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Horne: You didn't have an opportunity to answer, so I'd like to rephrase my question a bit. We've heard a lot today about the changes to the amount allocated in this budget to facilitate consultation with the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. This change comes at a time when both industry and indigenous groups are calling for the repeal of Bill 22. Can the minister expand on what the status of that repeal is and how this budget allows for a response in co-operation with First Nations?

Ms Ganley: In terms of Bill 22, that was intended to solve a specific problem, and that problem is that First Nations have a shortage of capacity to deal with the submissions coming in from industry proponents. Often industry proponents will come with submissions that are, you know, multiple binders long, of very technical information. Sometimes the nations don't have the people, the scientists and lawyers, to evaluate that. What that bill was intended to do was to create a situation where industry would pay into a pot, essentially, and it would go out to fund that. That's a problem that still needs solving, and we will be working, going forward, with our indigenous partners on a different solution.

The problem with the bill, as I understand it and as I have heard from First Nations, is that the previous government prior to the implementation didn't consult with them about it. They just sort of said, "Here's what we're doing," and then they did it. That has caused some upset, both amongst our First Nation partners and industry. That bill was never proclaimed into force, so it's not actually active right now; it's not doing anything. It is our intention and we continue to be committed to repeal it. We have brought forward a legislative proposal, but of course it will depend on how quickly things can be moved through the House.

Ms Kazim: Okay. Recently, a few weeks ago I attended a vigil in Calgary on missing and murdered indigenous women, and my understanding so far is that this government has joined in a call for the establishment of a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. What steps are being taken by your department to proactively address this ongoing and systemic issue right here in Alberta?

Ms Ganley: You know, as I think I just alluded in a recent question, we have internally reassigned some funding, \$133,000. In addition, we've managed to secure some new funding of \$125,000 for this year, and that amount will increase in further years. We are still hopeful that the new government, with their commitment to the UN declaration, will initiate a national inquiry on this subject, but we're also taking steps ourselves. We have new funding for the federal-provincial-territorial commitments stemming from the round-table. We have the economic security councils, both First Nations and Métis, sort of working on recommendations on how we can create greater security for indigenous women. We'll also be seeking proposals on doing some research to understand what the public perceptions are in terms of indigenous women so we can try to move that marker and we can know that we're changing the public perception so that they are safer and more respected in society.

Ms Kazim: Right. Yes. I can see in the estimates as well that there's an increase in the budget for aboriginal women's initiatives and research. Can you please explain a little bit more in terms of what

types of supports this increase in funding will go to, and how will it impact aboriginal women across the province?

Ms Ganley: I mean, we obviously are supporting a number of initiatives, one of them being the I Am a Kind Man initiative, in addition to those councils, and they're currently working on bringing forward a number of recommendations. Additionally, obviously we'll have some community-based initiatives to improve socioeconomic outcomes. We are hoping that that research that we do on perceptions in the general population will help us to determine where best to focus those funds so that we can sort of change hearts and minds in the nonindigenous community as well as change the fortunes and outcomes in terms of indigenous women.

11:55

Ms Kazim: Okay. Priority initiative 1.10 in the ministry business plan states that the ministry will "continue to lead the government's work with Siksika and Stoney Nakoda Nations on the repair and rebuild of homes and infrastructure affected by the 2013 ... floods." What are you doing to ensure that we can work with our aboriginal communities and partners to complete rebuilding these long-awaited projects?

Ms Ganley: Right. That's 1.10. Sorry. I did have the numbers in front of me just a moment ago. I understand that we're replacing and repairing a number of homes. We're sort of under way in terms of the Stoney Nation. With respect to Siksika we have partnered with the nation, so they're acting as the project manager on the project, and I understand that phases 1 and 2 are under way. Ah, there are my numbers. On Stoney Nakoda Nation 548 houses were impacted, 128 houses are fully repaired, three houses have been replaced, and 1,028 flood evacuees have been returned to their homes. Obviously, we're still working on a couple of them. With respect to Siksika Nation there were 136 houses impacted. They have been the project manager on that recovery, and 57 houses are currently in various stages of rebuild.

Mr. Horne: That's great to hear. The 2013 flood devastated a lot of communities, and I'm glad to hear that there's work being done on the aboriginal file as well.

I'm happy to see that one of this ministry's priority initiatives in these estimates includes collaborating "with other ministries to strengthen the economic capacity of Indigenous communities, organizations, small businesses and entrepreneurs to increase Indigenous participation in the labour market." We talked a bit about this earlier, but it's always great to get a bit more information on it. We know that we are in tough economic times. I am seeing this in my constituency, and we are seeing the impacts of this tough economic reality every day. Can you please speak to how this budget supports jobs and families in Alberta, especially indigenous families?

Ms Ganley: Sorry. We're just pulling the list. The ministry has a number of different grant streams that fund economic initiatives and that also fund initiatives to help people get trained up and join the labour force. In terms of labour force developments a lot of these projects are in partnership with communities to identify strengths, opportunities, and future training needs of aboriginal people to benefit from job opportunities. There are a number of grants there, totalling about \$2.3 million.

In addition, we have some economic partnerships programs. We have supported a number of these partnerships. One of the exciting ones, that I got to deal with early on, was with Siksika Nation, providing some funding so that small businesses are able to access capital, because we've been hearing from First Nations that

sometimes that's a challenge for them, accessing that advanced capital funding. This funding in the economic partnerships program is used for, as referenced, feasibility studies, business plans, entrepreneurial capacity development, workshops, expert advice, and professionals like accountants and management consultants.

Ms Kazim: Yes. I was making notes when I got the answer about the floods. I would like to thank you for the detailed answer. That was very good.

The other question I have is: given the challenges facing Alberta, how does this budget balance the maintenance of the much-needed public services and the need for fiscal restraint?

Ms Ganley: Well, I think that this budget actually, specifically in terms of this department, like, does a really good job of trying to balance that. I think that the people in this department are working incredibly . . . [a timer sounded]. Oh, I'm getting put off again.

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption. Sorry, Madam Minister.

I would like to now open the invitation to the Official Opposition for their 10 minutes.

Mr. Hanson: Can we have a full 10 minutes?

The Chair: The clock will expire at 12:10.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm going to defer a couple of questions to Mrs. Aheer and Mr. Loewen, and then hopefully I can squeeze in a conclusion at the end, please. Go ahead.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Thank you again. Minister, you had spoken about economic initiatives with regard to those broad investments of \$5,000 to \$150,000 for everything from feasibility studies, I believe it was, to entrepreneurial development. I think that was what you had said. Given that there is a limited understanding of that social return, as I understand it, and if you don't have that quantitative evidence or limited evidence, how do you determine the criteria for determining priorities of those projects and the costs related to those projects?

Ms Ganley: Well, I wouldn't say that there's a limited understanding of the return. I just think that not all of these grants are measured by the same metric, so it's difficult for me to say sort of what the metric is. Each individual grant will have in it certain measures in terms of how we measure accountability.

Mrs. Aheer: Within your collaborations, then, with First Nations, is that how you determine those metrics? How does that work? How do you determine those metrics?

Ms Ganley: Those grants are application based. We work with, you know, our experts and then with people on the First Nation and Métis side to determine what the deliverables should be and what the goals should be.

Mrs. Aheer: Does that get audited as well?

Ms Ganley: The grants have deliverables in them – it's, like, an agreement that gets signed – and then they are reviewed at the end.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Thank you very much, Minister. I'd like to defer to Mr. Loewen, please.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much. In our previous line of questioning, before we ran out of time, we were talking about the

First Nations development fund of \$120,774,000, and you agreed to of course table what these initiatives were and how much was spent on them and that sort of thing, and that's great. I want to reiterate that I believe that this is well intentioned, but again I want to reiterate that we need to make sure that these funds are providing positive results for the people intended. My question is: is there an impact assessment of this program?

Ms Ganley: The FNDF actually has an annual report, so I would encourage you to look into that. Every three years we have a rotating grant audit on all of the grants.

Mr. Loewen: Okay. Great. Where can we have copies of both?

Ms Ganley: We can make the annual report available to you. I don't think we report on the audit findings, but the annual report I can definitely make available to you.

Mr. Loewen: Maybe if you can table both, that would be great.

Ms Ganley: It doesn't sound like we have a public report on the audits.

Mr. Loewen: How about the other?

Ms Ganley: The annual report? Yeah, that's public. We can provide it to you.

Mr. Loewen: Great. Thanks.

Is there any reason why the other one isn't publicly available?

Ms Ganley: The intention for us is to work through those with the First Nations in terms of feedback and setting goals and determining where those go.

Mr. Loewen: Okay. It's not really clear if that was an answer to my question or not.

Ms Ganley: Well, it's funding that comes from First Nations casinos, so really it's accountable to the First Nations.

Mr. Loewen: Okay. I understand. Thank you.

I want to bring you back to where we started here today, operating expense, line 1, particularly lines 1.1 to 1.5, which is, of course, ministry support services. You'll find that on page 18, right at the top. Are you there, Minister?

12:05

Ms Ganley: Yeah.

Mr. Loewen: Okay. Great. Now, I know you seem to like comparing budget to estimate, but it seems like everybody else around the table likes to compare actual to estimate, so that's what I'm going to do right now. What I want to bring your attention to is that if we compare how much money was spent last year with the amount projected to be spent this year, that shows a 17.5 per cent increase.

Ms Ganley: I'm sorry. What line are you referring to?

Mr. Loewen: Line 1.5, corporate services. I'm looking at the 2014-2015 actual subtotal.

Ms Ganley: Oh, the subtotal, not a line item. Okay. Continue.

Mr. Loewen: Of course, I'm comparing again the actual, the 2014-2015 actual, to the 2015-2016 estimate, the subtotals. Again, that shows a 17.5 per cent increase. The question is: as this is ministry

support services, how will this increase in funding help Alberta's aboriginal people?

Ms Ganley: I think the first thing to note is that, again, you're off in terms of your numbers because we're talking about, you know, a much smaller increase in the budget compared to that.

Mr. Loewen: But it's still an increase even if you compare what you want to compare.

Ms Ganley: In terms of times when positions were vacant, I'm not totally, completely well versed on that. Certainly, it is the case that, obviously, there was an actual under the associate minister's office. There is no associate minister, so that's what happened to that. In terms of my office the budget has been decreased by just over \$90,000. In terms of the deputy minister's office we have a person from Justice who's come over.

Mr. Loewen: Okay. Thank you very much. That's good enough.

Mr. Hanson: We've been back and forth on what we call risky, worrisome accounting practices, but I'd like to take this opportunity to conclude by reinforcing the need to ensure that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit concerns are addressed through early consultation with government and industry partners. I think that's very, very important. If we can get that out of today, that'll be great.

I also would like to see that promises made to fulfill the LTAs and the MSA are implemented and completed, again with full consultation with the concerned parties, as soon as possible as I feel these issues have gone on long enough. When we get back to the MSA, they've been waiting 25 years for some of these lists. They need our help as government to step in and make sure that these things are implemented and completed. Basically, they're causing unnecessary division among the communities, and I think it's very important for them to carry on and to work together. We have to address these concerns and get them off the table because they do cause a rift there.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for your time today and everybody for their participation. Let's call it a day.

Thank you very much.

Ms Ganley: Just by way of response there, I think we changed our accounting procedures in line with the recommendations of the Auditor General. I'd like to say that those aren't risky accounting procedures. In fact, mostly what we're hearing from professionals is that moving to be in line with what the Auditor General has asked of us has actually been a good thing, but I appreciate it if you have a different opinion than the Auditor General does.

Mr. Hanson: I just look at running government like running a business, and that's probably the safest way to proceed. Thank you.

Ms Ganley: Should I respond to those other comments or not?

The Chair: There's still a minute left.

Ms Ganley: Okay. With respect to the Métis settlements the list has been developed. The problem is that the list was developed, and then after the list was developed, someone initiated a lawsuit to say that First Nations people should be struck from that list. The court ordered the registrar to do that, so we commenced doing that. That's what's going on. The list exists.

Mr. Hanson: Let's get it concluded so that all parties have been consulted and are happy with it so that we can move on.

Ms Ganley: If the hon. member would like to pose a suggestion on how we should do that, I would be more than happy to hear it.

Mr. Hanson: Consultation, in a word.

Ms Ganley: That is how we're doing it. I presumed you wanted a different solution.

Mr. Rodney: How many seconds?

The Chair: Thirteen.

Mr. Rodney: Great. Hon. colleagues, I just want to thank the minister in advance for written answers to the questions I asked earlier, as requested, in the spirit of collaboration and assisting our First Nations, Métis, Inuit communities and individuals.

Thank you, Madam Chair. How was that?

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Loewen: I move that we strike those last comments because he was not recognized.

Mr. Rodney: Oh, you're joking. She said that I had 13 seconds. I used them to the second.

Mr. Loewen: She didn't say that.

The Chair: I did say that. I said, "You have 13 seconds," I believe.

Mr. Loewen: Did you say it to him, or did you say it to us?

The Chair: He had asked, so I responded to him.

Mr. Loewen: Okay.

The Chair: I'd like to remind the committee members that we're scheduled to meet tomorrow morning to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Environment and Parks.

Thank you, everyone, for participating this morning. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 12:11 p.m.]

