

Title: Tuesday, March 16, 1999 Subcom. B: Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs  
 Date: 99/03/16  
 8:07 p.m.  
 [Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

### Subcommittee B - Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs

Tannas, Don, Chairman  
 Laing, Bonnie, Deputy Chairman  
 Barrett, Pam  
 Blakeman, Laurie  
 Calahasen, Pearl  
 Dickson, Gary  
 Doerksen, Victor  
 Forsyth, Heather

Fritz, Yvonne  
 Graham, Marlene  
 Hancock, Dave  
 Havelock, Jon  
 Jonson, Halvar  
 Kryczka, Karen  
 Leibovici, Karen

McClellan, Shirley  
 Melchin, Greg  
 Olsen, Sue  
 Paszkowski, Walter  
 Sloan, Linda  
 Soetaert, Colleen  
 Tarchuk, Janis

THE CHAIRMAN: Good evening. If we could begin subcommittee B, the estimates of the Department of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs. We'll perhaps begin the evening's questioning by calling on the Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs to open it. There are two ways you can do it. You can have speeches and questions and take your 20 minutes, or you can have give and take, back and forth. That's up to the subcommittee.

We'll begin with the minister.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to start by introducing some departmental officials who are here with me to hear the questions and assist me with providing responses: Deputy Minister Ron Hicks, the assistant deputy minister and our chief honcho with respect to business planning, Wayne Clifford, and our financial guru, Les Speakman. [interjection] Well, I can never remember the official titles.

I'd like to give just a brief overview of some of the minister's responsibilities and some of the priorities for the coming year. The mandate of the ministry of course is

to lead the development of government-wide policies and strategies for Alberta's relations with other Canadian governments (federal, provincial and Aboriginal), the Aboriginal community, and international governments and organizations.

In '99-2000 the department will focus on three key goals:

- To secure benefits for Alberta as an equal partner in a revitalized, united federation.
- To support Aboriginal people and governments in achieving self-reliance and enhanced well-being.
- To secure benefits for Alberta from strengthened international relations.

The ministry's work fits with the government's overarching priorities of people, prosperity, and preservation. More specifically, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs will support several governmentwide goals.

Goal 2: "Our children will be well cared for, safe, successful at learning and healthy." Ensuring that the Canadian federal system better serves the needs of Albertans and promoting the self-reliance and well-being of aboriginal communities and people are departmental priorities.

Goal 6: "Alberta will have a prosperous economy." The promotion of liberalized trade in Canada and abroad and of the Alberta advantage through missions and incoming visits supports prosperity in Alberta.

Goal 7: "Our workforce will be skilled and productive." We worked to reduce barriers to labour mobility and to encourage the creation of educational and economic opportunities for aboriginal people.

Goal 13: "Alberta businesses will increase exports." We will

advance Alberta's interests through trade negotiations and build intergovernmental relationships in key markets.

Goal 16: "The high quality of Alberta's environment will be maintained." We support the efforts of other government departments in negotiation of effective strategies in environmental management.

Goal 18: "Alberta will work with other governments and maintain its strong position in Canada." The work of the department will actively place Alberta in a leadership position in trade, intergovernmental activities such as action on the social union, and aboriginal affairs.

Our budget for the 1999-2000 year is \$34.4 million, of which \$12.6 million is for departmental activities and \$21.8 million is a grant to Alberta's Métis settlements. Our objectives will be achieved through the work of a full-time staff complement of 94, up slightly from the '98-99 level of 90. Two of these staff will be dedicated to the new Francophone Secretariat.

The ministry's intergovernmental relations section reviews policies, programs, and legislation, participates in negotiation of international agreements and intergovernmental agreements, and offers advice and logistical support for the annual First Ministers' and Premiers' conferences. In May Alberta will host the Western Premiers' Conference in Drumheller, and the ministry is already immersed in the planning and preparation for that event.

In February our Premier joined his counterparts in signing the framework to improve the social union for Canadians. Officials from IAA co-ordinated Alberta's negotiating position and led Alberta's participation in the negotiations on the agreement, providing critical support to both the Premier and to my colleague the Minister of Family and Social Services. The framework outlines the key principles that underlie how federal and provincial governments will work together, and turning those principles into working relationships and policies will take an enormous amount of co-operation over the next few years. There will need to be an ongoing dialogue regarding the fit of any new federal initiatives with existing provincial programs, and a dispute-resolution mechanism needs to be established.

The agreement provides opportunities for Alberta. It calls for the development of public accountability measures for government expenditure, and Alberta's experience makes us a natural leader in the area. I strongly suspect that our expertise in all departments will be called upon frequently over the next few years.

Earlier today I announced the creation of the new provincial Francophone Secretariat. The secretariat will ensure strong representation of Alberta's Francophone community at intergovernmental discussions on matters relevant to them, including federal funding of Francophone programs.

The ministry will also continue its efforts to reform Canadian federalism, focusing on renewed federal/provincial fiscal arrangements and initiatives to reform the Senate and other institutions in the Canadian federation. I should mention under that category that one of the things that wasn't commented on at length but was

certainly integral to the whole social union discussion and led by Alberta was the equalization of the CHST grants. In the past they haven't been done on a per capita basis, and one of the agreements made by the federal government as part of signing the social union was to do the CHST grants on a per capita basis rather than using them also as a method of equalizing across the country.

In trade policy Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs is charged with managing the development of Alberta's overall trade policy, both domestic and international. Over the last several years trade policy and negotiations have expanded into new areas such as environmental regulations, labour standards, resource management practices, and professional and occupational qualifications. As a result, virtually every government department is or could be impacted by a trade negotiation. IAA serves as both the coordinator of the activities of other ministries as well as a resource to those ministries.

Again in the area of trade policy I would indicate publicly here that our trade policy group in IAA is considered to be the best in Canada in terms of provincial organizations, provincial governments, and has a high degree of respect from the federal government and is consulted by the federal government on trade matters. As part of the responsibility for trade policy IAA works with the departments on their domestic regulatory and legislative initiatives. We advise on measures advocated by a ministry to ensure that there are no inadvertent conflicts with provisions under the agreement on internal trade, the North American free trade agreement, and other trade agreements. Our advice has helped to avoid formal disputes and potential retaliation. We would encourage the federal government to take our advice with respect to split-run magazines in that kind of area. The department also helps ensure that federal trade policy respects provincial jurisdiction and reflects Alberta's priorities.

Over the next year I'll be assuming the role of co-chair of the Committee on Internal Trade, and in this position I will be advocating for greater action on free trade within Canada and for improvements in the dispute-resolution mechanism contained in the agreement on internal trade. IAA will be conducting consultations with the business sector in Alberta regarding the agreement on internal trade until the end of this month. The information gathered will be used to develop Alberta's position in the negotiations.

We will also continue our support to the MASH sector as it comes under the procurement provisions of the agreement in July of this year, and we'll continue to manage complaints and defend Alberta's interest in disputes. We have an excellent record in this, with every one of six complaints against Alberta settled and 20 of 31 complaints against other governments resolved, most of them in our favour.

World Trade Organization talks are expected in the next year in the areas of agricultural services and government procurement and possibly other sectors. As with internal trade, we are consulting with Albertans to develop our negotiating position, and the consultations are now under way.

We're continuing to seek a formal federal/provincial agreement for full participation in Canada's negotiation of international agreements that affect provincial jurisdictions or interests. IAA coordinates Alberta's overall strategic relationship with governments outside of Canada. This is done by supporting Team Canada and Team Alberta missions, co-ordinating visits by delegations from other countries, fostering regional alliances with our U.S. neighbours, participating in international governance projects, and strengthening twinning relationships in key markets. Over the next few years, IAA will work closely with the Alberta Economic Development Authority and Economic Development in planning international missions. A Team Canada mission is expected in the fall in which our government and Alberta business will participate.

Alberta will also play host to a number of visiting delegations. We are currently preparing for a visit from the Premier of China, Zhu Rongji, next month and by the Governor of Kangwon, Korea, in May to mark the 25th anniversary of our relationship with that province. IAA is also involved in a number of U.S. regional alliances such as PNWER, the Western Governors' Association, the Alberta/Montana Boundary Advisory Committee, and the Northern Forum. Each of these provides an opportunity for discussion of shared interests and concerns: economic, environmental, and governmental. During the next year the government will be represented at meetings of these organizations, and in June of 1999 the annual meeting of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region will be held in Edmonton. This will provide an opportunity for Alberta business leaders to interact with their counterparts from the north-west United States, and I would invite each and every one of you to consider participating in that forum. In conjunction with that meeting, there will be a meeting of the CanAm Border Trade Alliance, a Washington, D.C., group which works to remove border obstacles.

8:17

Alberta has sister-province relationships in China, Japan, Korea, Russia, Latin America, and South Africa. An assessment of our twinning relationships will be completed this spring with recommendations which will help us to make them more effective.

The ministry also promotes the province's involvement in international co-operation and governance projects co-ordinated through organizations such as the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency. A key area is improving governance in developing countries, and Alberta is regarded as having important expertise in this area. In the past year a major governance project in South Africa was awarded to Alberta, which has resulted in providing expertise and assistance in the area of outcome-based education. Over the last few months the department has supported a consultation led by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall on Alberta's involvement in these projects. The consultation showed that Alberta companies, nongovernmental organizations, and educational institutions continue to support Alberta and the Alberta government role in this area.

Briefly, with respect to Indian land claims on the aboriginal affairs side, the ministry has an important role to play. June 1999 marks the centennial of the signing of Treaty 8. We've just reached an agreement in principle with the Loon River Cree First Nation. In fact, they voted on it last week, and it's been approved by the Loon River First Nation. That's the 10th land claim settled in Alberta since 1989, and we're also close to an agreement in principle with Canada and the Salt River First Nation regarding a claim in the Fitzgerald area in northeastern Alberta.

Development of an aboriginal policy framework is a critical activity of the ministry this year. The policy framework will provide a basis to address significant disparities between the socioeconomic conditions in aboriginal communities and other Alberta communities, address increasing uncertainty with respect to natural resource development and the rights of aboriginal people, and address clarification of roles and responsibilities between provincial, federal, and aboriginal governments.

Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs will also conduct sector-specific discussions under the recently signed Peigan/Alberta protocol agreement, the soon-to-be-signed Alberta Métis Nation of Alberta framework agreement, the Métis Nation/Canada/Alberta tripartite process agreement, the Métis Settlements/Canada/Alberta tripartite process agreement, and other formal and informal agreements. We're also in the process of negotiating an aboriginal youth

framework agreement in co-operation with other Canadian governments and aboriginal organizations.

Alberta is the only province in Canada that has provided a land base for its Métis population. This year \$21.8 million has been allocated to Alberta's Métis Settlements. This includes a \$10 million statutory payment established by the Métis Settlements Accord Implementation Act and \$11.8 million for funding areas such as settlement operations, specific capital projects, and the Métis Settlements Transition Commission. We've completed an administrative review of each of the settlements. Most of the problems found by the review stem simply from administrative inexperience, but all settlements have been provided with the review documents and have been asked to prepare plans to address areas requiring improvement and to account to their settlement members for both the problems identified in the review and the solutions that they're proposing to put forward.

We will continue to work with the Métis Settlements General Council to support the efforts of Métis people toward effective self-governance and self-reliance. This year a task force has been established to review the Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal. The task force will look at whether the tribunal's mandate should be expanded to better serve the needs of people on Métis settlements and in that context to provide a more effective place for persons who have concerns arising out of the operations of the settlements to go for redress.

IAA is a ministry of varied and complex responsibilities, and as a result it relies on a number of types of measures to assess performance. Reports on ministry performance provide a detailed narrative record of achievements and activities. The annual report documents accomplishments related to the business plan, and other reports are done at the conclusion of major conferences, missions, and trade negotiations. Comprehensive client satisfaction surveys allow ministry clients to evaluate our contribution to specific initiatives. The 1999 survey indicated a continued high level of satisfaction with our services, averaging 4.1 out of 5. Regular progress or status reports are prepared to measure immediate outcomes on multiyear projects, for example on internal trade negotiations. The ministry reports on a number of secondary indicators which track macroeconomic and sociodemographic trends used to gauge the environment within which we operate, and public polling data measures the satisfaction of Albertans with government activity in the areas of federal/provincial relations and aboriginal issues. In the next year the ministry will develop governmentwide measures which will encompass a number of ministries and will specifically focus on the well-being of the aboriginal population. They'll be used to track progress in approving key areas of socio-economic well-being.

So with that brief overview I would invite any questions you might have.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much. I'm pleased to be able to participate in this debate, and may I compliment *Hansard* on the exquisite coloured microphone muffs. They're very festive, put us all in the right mood to be serious about debating this budget.

I made a number of notes while the minister was speaking, and maybe I'll start with the questions that came to mind as a result of that. I notice that the Métis Settlements Transition Commission is now being funded through lottery money. I'd like to know why that decision was made to move it to lottery money. What was the criterion that was used? Is there a sunset clause in this? Has it been agreed to fund it out of lottery money for a specific period of time,

or is this forevermore? Is there any commitment by the department should there be no more lottery money to resume funding of this area back out of general revenues of the department?

I'm wondering which line item I would find the Francophone Secretariat listed under. I recognize this was just announced today, but one presumes that it's included in this budget item. Sorry that I'm jumping around on subjects, but I was following your presentation. I'm wondering if the minister can share with us what advice they gave, I presume the federal government, on the MAI agreement. I'm also interested in what advice the province put forward on the split-run magazines.

On behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Norwood I would like to go through some questions on aboriginal affairs. I note that aboriginal self-reliance has decreased by some 65 percent; aboriginal relations has increased by 54 percent. The Métis Settlements Transition Commission is now funded through the lotteries, although I did notice there's a slight difference. The amount of money being transferred into the lotteries I think was \$11.3 million, and I see the expense line is \$11.8 million, so why wasn't it totally funded under the lottery money? Is there an accounting for the difference? Overall the Métis settlements governance is down by 5.6 percent.

Specific questions. I think it's under item 2.1. Yes, it is. What parameters have been placed on the aboriginal policy framework? By what standards will the socioeconomic indicators be determined? I'm still under 2.1. What's the benchmark to determine that the aboriginal population has reached a sufficient socioeconomic status? That seems to be a key goal with you, so what is the criterion that determines that sufficient socioeconomic status has indeed been reached? As well, what are the indicators used to determine the level of well-being? What criterion is used to determine that? Is it a survey of the population? Is it higher birth weights, less teen pregnancies, fewer people with alcohol or drug abuse problems? What's criteria are used to reach this?

8:27

What parameters have been developed for Alberta's participation in the self-government negotiations? You did speak on that, and I was trying to follow, so I'm sorry if I didn't get clear on that. Who will determine what the federal responsibilities are or what the sharing is? Are there certain items under aboriginal affairs which are being off-loaded into the federal domain or coming the other way? What protocol has been developed between departments for promoting constructive relationships? What action will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of aboriginal people while developing the database of information acquired and prepared by the provincial departments? That's an interesting question, because I wonder how many aboriginal people have access to that database that's being kept on them and who else has access to the database if it's used by all provincial departments. What percentage of funding will be provided for hardware for aboriginal communities in order to assist them in managing their own affairs, and will technical support and training be provided as well?

Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal, 2.0.2. What self-reliance initiatives are being funded, and could you give some examples of that? I should say that I'm not expecting the minister to be able to answer every one of these questions, and I'm sure that my colleague from Edmonton-Norwood would be happy to receive the answers in writing. Actually I know she would be, seeing as she's unable to be here tonight to get that. Oh, I'm not supposed to say that. Sorry. Oh, goodness. All right. I'll just keep asking the questions then.

Can you please provide examples of how aboriginal communities are being helped to participate in local economic development? Is the department consulting with companies to find the best ways to

encourage aboriginal participation? How is the success of the programs and the assistance measured? Again, is this a survey? Is this client satisfaction? Are there some other indicators that let us know whether this advice or these programs are improving? Is there a benchmark that everything is measured against?

How has the department of aboriginal affairs assisted in the negotiation process between the Department of Family and Social Services and First Nations for the provision of child welfare services? I know this is of great interest given that we're now launching our way into children's regional authorities - did I get that in the right order? - particularly since one of the four pillars was to be aboriginal participation in the design and implementation of that new system.

MS CALAHASEN: Child and family service authorities.

MS BLAKEMAN: Child and family service authorities. Thank you.

What measures are used to determine the success rate of programs provided in the aboriginal communities? What negotiations has the Department of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs been part of to help alleviate the lack of approved adoptions of aboriginal children? Again, I know that's an issue of some sensitivity that many are interested in.

What role does this government see itself in, as the responsibility for self-government initiatives is federal, in relation to the aboriginal population? What is the provincial role when we're talking about self-government initiatives?

Which sectors are being negotiated with to develop initiatives under the Alberta/MNAA framework agreement? With which sectors are discussions being held under the Peigan/Alberta protocol agreement? You did mention that in your opening.

What are the parameters for negotiation for the national aboriginal youth framework? What areas are specifically targeted for that national aboriginal youth framework?

Who conducted the Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs client survey? What questions were included, and where could the responses be found or obtained? If it's possible to get a copy, I want to ask for that now.

Under 2.0.3, Métis settlements funding, you mentioned the land claims. I'm just wondering how many are currently being negotiated. You have concluded Loon Lake's? There are no land claims under this?

MR. HANCOCK: Not under Métis settlements.

MS BLAKEMAN: Okay. Well, I hope I'm in the right place. Are there any land claims being negotiated?

MR. HANCOCK: Yes. Under 2.0.3, native land claims.

MS BLAKEMAN: That's what I said, 2.0.3. Okay. Good; I'm in the right place.

Which bands and what claims might actually be settled this year? [interjection] That's Loon Lake.

MR. HANCOCK: And Salt River.

MS BLAKEMAN: Salt River. Thank you.

What is the definition of "a timely manner" when used by government in relation to the settling of land claims? You said that there have been 10 settled in the last 10 years?

MR. HANCOCK: Yeah. One a year.

MS BLAKEMAN: So one per year. Is that the government's definition of timely?

MR. HANCOCK: Do you want me to answer your questions now?

MS BLAKEMAN: No. Sorry. I'm looking for hand signals, and that's not fair.

What memorandum of understanding has been signed between the Department of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Justice to ensure that aboriginal land claims litigation is managed properly? And under 2.4, how many appeals were held last year in each category? And where is the socioeconomic data for Métis settlements' residence?

At this point I think I've asked the questions that my colleague from Edmonton-Norwood was looking to ask. I will rest briefly and allow some of my other colleagues to ask questions, and maybe I can come back and ask more as we progress.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, do you wish to begin some of the answers now, or do you want to get all of the questions out of the way?

MR. HANCOCK: Well, we could answer some of the questions. First of all, the question that came up first is with respect to funding through lotteries. In finding programs related to funds through the lottery funds, we're looking for programs where services or infrastructure are being delivered back into the communities. Of course, the funding through the Métis Settlements Transition Commission is directly putting money back into the communities, so that's what was contemplated in funding that portion through the Métis Settlements Transition Commission.

In terms of the Francophone Secretariat, which line? There are only two lines in my budget. It's not Métis settlements; it's the other one. But in terms of the business plan, it's 1.3(c).

In terms of advice to the feds re the MAI. The MAI is dead, so it's not really something that's prospective in terms of next year's budget, but in terms of what we said to them last year, if I can provide a very brief and unfair synopsis of it: if they were going to get it too complex and into areas such as labour and the environment, we weren't too interested in it, that we were interested in an agreement which would provide for reciprocal investment rules and that we are interested, of course, in environmental and labour standards but that we thought they should be dealt with in the same manner as NAFTA in terms of being side agreements.

With respect to split-run magazines, we've advised the federal government that we have absolutely no problem with the concept that they want to protect the Canadian heritage, however they may define that, but that they shouldn't do it with mechanisms which interfere with the appropriate balance of trade and the appropriate trade rules. There are mechanisms which they can utilize if they want to encourage a magazine industry in Canada which would not conflict with the international trade rules, and we would encourage them to use those mechanisms rather than bringing in legislation which might harm particular industries, including, for example, the plastic sector, which could affect Alberta drastically, the forestry sector, even perhaps the agricultural sector. So we're encouraging them, rather than to go the legislative route, which might interfere with trade rules and not be in alignment with trade rules, to do it through other mechanisms.

8:37

In terms of the aboriginal self-reliance going down 65 percent and the other line going up 61 percent, it's simply a matter of we've

consolidated all the granting programs in the one that went up and taken them out of the one that went down. They'd been split across the two before.

In terms of the transfer to lotteries I think I've dealt with that. If not, we'll catch it and give you some additional answers later.

With respect to the Métis settlements funds going down, we're on a matching grants replacement agreement, and under the matching grants replacement agreement there was about a \$700,000 decrease this year in the moneys that we'd be paid. You'll find that that money has been shifted up to the other line in the department so that our funding stays essentially neutral and perhaps goes up a little.

In terms of the parameters of the aboriginal policy framework, we are in the process of developing the aboriginal policy framework as we speak. It hasn't been completed as yet. But when you talk about benchmarks for socioeconomic conditions, the best way that I could describe them in brief terms would be that we believe aboriginal Albertans should enjoy the same socioeconomic standards as other Albertans on average. So that would be the benchmark that we would be putting forward as something to shoot for.

I'm going to jump over the parameters for participation in self-governance discussions. You have another question later on about self-governance, but the bottom line is that the Alberta government has indicated that conceptually we will deal with First Nations on a government-to-government basis. We recognize that aboriginal self-government is not yet a reality. That is clearly something that the federal government has to be involved in because the First Nations are constitutionally aligned with the federal government rather than the provincial government. But there is certainly a role for us because so many of the things that we do interact with aboriginal people, whether they're First Nations, Métis, off-reserve aboriginal people, or otherwise. In terms of entering into discussions with respect to self-governance, what we're really engaged in on a provincial level is building self-reliance and building self-reliant communities.

Who will determine what federal responsibilities, and are we off-loading to the federal domain? I wish. In fact we're trying very hard to have the federal government interpret the Constitution as it was written, which is that they are responsible for Indians and land reserved for Indians, as opposed to the way that they would like to interpret it, which is Indians on land reserved for Indians, and there's a huge difference. The difference we estimate to be at least in the \$68 million range in terms of services that we're providing, health and other socioeconomic costs to society which we bear and we willingly bear, because they are Albertans as well. But in terms of constitutional responsibility aboriginal affairs is primarily a federal responsibility.

Confidentiality of data. We're not talking about collecting specific data on specific people. The data that we've been looking at so far has been data generated by the Canadian census and other data-collecting operations, perhaps Alberta Health and others. So we're not talking about individual specific data, we're not talking about any problem with respect to disclosure of individual confidential information, and we're not building up our own new database or our own new bureaucracy to do that.

In terms of Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal and self-reliance initiatives, I'm not sure what that question relates to. Perhaps that was two lines consolidated there.

In terms of the Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal itself we're doing a review now, because one of the problems with the self-governance model that Métis settlements operate under is that settlement members and individuals who have a grievance really have no effective place to go. They can go to the minister's office, but the minister's options are catastrophic, in terms of firing

settlement councils and those sorts of things. It's not an appropriate way nor an effective way to deal with the issues that come up from time to time either between settlement members, between settlement members and settlement councils, between settlements, or between settlement councils and the general council.

So we're in the process of reviewing the Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal's jurisdiction to see whether in fact there's an appropriate way that we can expand that to make it in effect a court, if you will, not with full court status, of course, but a place where settlement members could go in the first instance to have their claims or grievances adjudicated and with an effective result.

Are we consulting with companies? Examples of consulting with companies? There are a number of ways that we're working in terms of trying to build partnerships and trying to make industry aware of the need to work with aboriginal people and First Nations to provide access to economic opportunity. One good example would be in northeastern Alberta, where a number of the oil sands oil companies and resource development companies have formed a working group with the First Nations in that area, and we've agreed to be a partner at the table in those discussions. Industry is putting in some money. They're of course asking the federal and provincial governments to put in money. We've indicated that we would certainly be willing to look at project areas that were within our area of jurisdiction. But essentially what industry, government, and the First Nations communities are looking at is building capacity so that the people in those areas can have the capacity to be able to develop self-reliance and participate.

We don't operate very many programs. In fact, we don't operate any programs, but we do help finance certain initiatives. For example, we have provided a staff person and dollars for what's known as the Grande Cache Co-operative and the Aseniwuche Winewak Society up in the Grande Cache area. Now what do they call themselves? The Aseniwuche Winewak Nation? Basically what they're doing is putting together a development plan, a community building plan to show how the communities might develop, how they might have access to resources, and how they might work with local industry. As well, we co-operate in the job corp program, job corp basically providing expertise and training expertise to go out and assist communities and members of the communities to, for example, learn how to build houses while they're building their own houses.

Measures of success. Well, I'll skip that one, and we can give you more detailed answers on how we measure our success in those.

In terms of child welfare agreements, I'll leave that one for a longer answer later.

Adoption. Again, with some of the questions that relate to Family and Social Services, adoptions, child welfare agreements, you're going to have to appreciate that the function and role we play is a policy development role. We don't deliver program services, but we do encourage each other department of government to consider the needs of the aboriginal community and the aboriginal people in Alberta when they're developing and delivering their programs. As you quite rightly alluded to, child and family services authorities have a major aboriginal component to them. We will, of course, assist in creating relationships, helping to build relationships, and helping to ensure that departments have a good knowledge base as to how to appropriately approach First Nations or other aboriginal communities.

Sectors under the MNAA framework agreement. There's a new framework agreement. The old framework agreement expired either in April or August of last year, depending on whose version you look to, but it doesn't matter because we've been negotiating a new framework agreement. I think we've achieved an agreement now, which will be signed later this month or the beginning of April.

They will be continuing to operate within the current sectors of operation which, if I'm not mistaken, includes Municipal Affairs, Education, Advanced Education, and Economic Development. If I've missed one, I'll provide it to you later.

Under the Peigan Alberta protocol agreement there's a number of very important areas for discussion there. We've had a long-standing group of concerns which need to be addressed, not the least of which is fixing the headworks on the irrigation canal which was damaged in floods several years ago. We've been patiently trying to negotiate access. We have a right of access, actually, under the agreement under which those headworks were constructed, but rather than exercise our rights under the agreement, we've been trying to negotiate with the Peigan for a considerable period of time to have access. So that's a major item. Some of their concerns, of course, are their allegations with respect to water damage in the river valley and other areas, so there's a fairly long list of issues on the table. Basically we've said to them that there's no issue that can't be on the table. There are some issues which they should know up front that we cannot move on; for example, the fundamental water rights issue, which is a subject of litigation.

8:47

I'll wait till later to give you a written answer with respect to the aboriginal youth framework agreement.

With respect to land claim settlements I think Alberta has a phenomenal record. As I said in my opening remarks, we've settled 10 in the last 10 years. The Loon River settlement has just been finalized, and the Loon River First Nation has voted on it. That's one of the substantial settlements. That's one of the First Nations which had no land set aside for reserve in the past, so that's a major accomplishment and a major step forward. I'm looking forward to bringing the agreement through cabinet for ratification immediately, within the next month. There's an appeal period after their vote process.

With respect to the other settlements, the Salt River First Nation settlement is close to agreement. I think we have agreement on all the major points, so we expect we'll be signing that this year. That will, of course, then have a process for ratification. I might say on the Loon one that we signed the Loon agreement in principle in January of last year, and we will be able to actually finalize it in April of this year. I think that is a record time in terms of land claim settlements moving from agreement in principle to settlement, if I'm not mistaken. Usually these things take a long time. To give you an idea, on your question of timely, how long some of these take to implement, we've just signed the orders in council transferring the mineral titles and the final details on the Tallcree settlement in the last month, and that one was signed six years ago, seven years ago. So these are not easy agreements to achieve and the implementation takes a great deal of time, but the progress that we've made in Alberta is second to none in this country, and I think we're rightly proud of it.

One of the other things I'd say is that one of the first things I communicated to Jane Stewart, my federal counterpart, in our first meeting was that 100 years is just about enough time to fulfill our obligations under treaties and that I thought we should get all of the Treaty 8 outstanding things on the table. To her credit she's moved ahead very rapidly in recognizing the Bigstone claim and getting that on the table for negotiation, moving the Salt River claim back on the table, and moving the Alexander claim, which we signed off last fall, to finalization after that had been put off for a number of years. So this is one area, I think, where there's been good cooperation federally and provincially. I understand there's even been some progress on the Lubicon claim.

In terms of the number of appeals and details like that, I'll leave those for longer answers later.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The next person on my list is the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, since you wear two hats, it's nice to see you wearing the other one tonight.

I have a number of questions relating to the goal of securing benefits for Alberta from strengthened international relations. I notice an increase of 21.5 percent in the international relations area, from \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million. Then I notice also a further increase in trade policy of 14.2 percent. What I have to ask is: how do you co-ordinate what you do through your department with what's being done by Economic Development, which also is focused on international trade? I'm not clear as to how you sort of delineate between the two.

Now, we're talking about international trade, and I look at the goals on page 275 of the coil-bound book, the major strategies. You talk about strengthening "Alberta intergovernmental relations with key foreign economic partners." Mr. Minister, how do you possibly rationalize that goal with this province's complete lack of leadership in dealing with the European Union privacy directive?

The EU privacy directive came into force in the fall of 1998, and the amount of trade last time I looked - and I don't have hard numbers on this - that this province does in terms of export of services and export of goods is in the multi hundred million dollar area. Now, the EU privacy directive means that those western European nations will no longer carry on trade with nations, including Canada and Canadian provinces, if we're dealing with data exchange, if the other trading nation, in this case Alberta, does not have legislated privacy protection. Mr. Minister, Quebec is the only province in Canada that's compliant with the EU directive.

I've been raising this for at least three years with your counterpart, with the Minister of Economic Development, and to date the extent of Alberta's involvement has been one crummy two-page letter from the chief information officer to the federal government suggesting that they wanted more consultation. So I'm real interested in terms of how you're going to achieve goal 3 when we have this major problem with the EU privacy directive.

Now, the thing related to that is Bill C-54. Part of your mandate, as I take it, is to deal with national issues that have a big impact in provinces. Bill C-54 is one of the most significant legislative developments we've seen in the last decade. It's going to require in three years that every business in this province carrying on trade outside its boundaries either comply with the 10 principles or there has to be some Alberta legislation. I wonder what leadership you're providing, Mr. Minister, in dealing with Bill C-54.

Manitoba and Saskatchewan are talking about court challenges. Manitoba has undertaken a series of public consultations. I'd like to know, Mr. Minister, what the current position of this provincial government is, because, as I say, the last thing I saw was the letter from the chief information officer and then subsequently there's been some work. The Justice minister has a representative to the Uniform Law Commission, which has been doing some work around it.

Big trade implications with both the EU privacy directive and Bill C-54, and I'm frankly disappointed that I don't see either of those two items identified in the major strategies in terms of how you're going to deal with that. I assume that your department has done some impact analysis, so maybe you can share with me how many jobs are at risk, how many millions or hundreds of thousands of dollars of export trade are at risk because of our noncompliance with the EU privacy directive.

Just moving on from that, the Western Governors' Association. I've heard a complaint. In fact I remember talking to a legislator from Wisconsin who was surprised that this province, given the amount of trade we do with western U.S. states, isn't more actively involved in the Western Governors' Association. There's also a state legislators conference, and there are some provinces, like Saskatchewan, that seem to have been quite active in that. At least that's my perception. I'm curious, Mr. Minister, in terms of what Alberta's role is. Maybe it's changed. My information would be at least a year stale.

8:57

The other thing I wanted to ask about was the multilateral agreement on investment. If it's mentioned in here, I don't see it anywhere. My understanding is that it's sort of been dormant for a time, and now it looks like there may be some further movement in that area. Your government has been quick to point out to the federal government some concerns they had with the UN convention on the rights of the child, yet on the multilateral agreement on investment - this province, it seemed to me, was one that did not, as I think B.C. and Ontario did, register a list of concerns around that. So I'm interested in an update, if you will, in terms of what's happening with MAI.

That also brings up the other area of compliance with international conventions. The international UN conventions require reporting, and all signatory states have to at periodic times file a compliance. It's sort of a self-reporting thing. Since most of the impact of human rights legislation in any of those UN conventions that Canada is a signatory to is in an area of provincial jurisdiction in terms of where people are directly affected, I'm interested in what this province has done in terms of compliance assessment and whether either you've been solicited by the federal government for compliance information to forward to the UN or this province does it on its own. I don't know that, Mr. Minister, and I'm sure interested in finding out.

If in fact Alberta is providing a report to the federal government which then forms part of Canada's monitoring and compliance reporting to the UN, I've never seen that document. How do Albertans know what's in there? If that sort of compliance document comes from the province, is that publicly available? If not, why not? If so, how do I or any other Albertan that wants to see the government's self-reporting access it? I think many of us would be interested in seeing how the government self-reports in terms of human rights compliance, and since it seems that we've now affirmed the UN convention on the rights of the child, what process is going to be there in terms of registering compliance?

The other thing, Mr. Minister, is that there'd been an interesting FOIP inquiry involving your department perhaps two or three years ago. I remember that there were some documents that hadn't been turned over by the department, and subsequently Justice Cairns in a judicial inquiry ordered that those documents be turned over. Given the recent inquiry into noncompliance with section 9 by the Premier's office and the Executive Council office, I'm wondering if there have been any changes to the in-service training around FOIP to the key staff in your department.

The other question I was going to ask is: just in terms of FOIP requests can you advise, Mr. Minister, how many requests you've received in the last fiscal year?

MR. HANCOCK: Am I entitled to know that?

MR. DICKSON: Well, I'd hope so. You had a FOIP co-ordinator who, I'm sure, is working day and night to manage these things. It's fair to say that you're probably not getting as many as your colleague

Dr. Oberg, but I'm interested in how many you've received, how many you've accepted in full or in part, how many have been deemed discontinued or abandoned because of nonpayment of fees. That information would be helpful as well, Mr. Minister.

The other matter. The Chinese consulate in Calgary is in my constituency. There have been questions raised in terms of communication from the People's Republic of China consulate in Calgary. There was one particular incident where there was some concern about democratic public protest in the streets of Calgary around the visit of a recent dignitary, and I'd be interested in whether there is a particular protocol that your department has around that when we're dealing with representatives of nations that don't have what we might describe as the mature democracy that we like to think we have in this country. Do you have some kind of protocol around visiting dignitaries?

I look at what happened during the APEC inquiry and the concern there over what was perceived to be an overreaction by domestic authorities. Fortunately we've never had anything like that here. Hopefully there never will be. But I'm curious. What's the protocol around that? Is that through your office? Is it through the Premier's office? I don't know, Mr. Minister, but I have some questions about that. I've heard lots from people who have views in terms of what happened at the APEC inquiry, about the role of the federal/provincial government there, and I guess I'm interested in terms of how those kinds of issues are managed in this province.

I think those are the questions I've got right now, Mr. Minister. Thanks very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just before we start, Mr. Minister, if we could just have a commercial. We have a watch, what appears to be a ladies watch or a small men's watch, that was found out by the telephone, if it belongs to anybody. If not, we'll hand it over to security. Edmonton-Gold Bar did the good deed.

Hon. minister.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to the first question, talking about a 21.5 increase in international and 14.29 in trade policy, I don't see the same numbers that you're seeing, so perhaps you could provide me with some detail afterwards as to what you're talking about. I show the international budget going in '98-99 from 1,429,000 to 1,541,000 and the trade side going from 644,000 to 640,000, so trade actually going down, international going up slightly. Many of the increases in my department - I'll be frank - have to do with increases in staff salaries. We didn't have much of an increase in any opportunity for funding over and above that. But if you provide me with the numbers you're dealing with, I can get you a more detailed answer.

With respect to co-ordination with Economic Development, it's an annual question and an annual answer, and I would refer you to the answer that we gave last year to the same question. The synopsis is that Economic Development deals with trade promotion, and Intergovernmental Affairs deals with trade policy. So if we're talking about free trade, about international trade agreements, if we're talking about the World Trade Organization, trade policy issues, or free trade with the Americas, that falls into the context of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs. If you're talking about promoting agricultural products, that might fall into Agriculture. If you're talking about developing economic opportunities on an industry basis, that would clearly fall within Economic Development. So they're in the trade promotion business; we're in the trade policy business.

With respect to the privacy directive, again the question was asked and I believe answered last year. This ties directly into Bill C-54.

Labour, actually, is heading up this because it deals with privacy issues and information issues, so there is an intergovernmental committee that's reviewing C-54 and the issues coming out of C-54. We're concerned to a great extent, in the same manner that Saskatchewan has alluded to and that other provinces are, with respect to the intrusion into areas of provincial jurisdiction. We've advised the federal government on that basis, and in fact the Minister of Labour has had a meeting with the relevant federal minister as late as February on that issue.

9:07

In terms of analysis, those issues coming out of it, impact analysis, we'll give you a response later. I don't believe there's been any extensive detailed studies done on impact analysis of the directive. As with last year I'm very interested in the potential impact of the privacy directive from the European Union. Again, we look to the federal government primarily in those international areas to start the negotiations and dealings. We were, I think, surprised that the federal officials had indicated the new legislation would apply only to the federally regulated private sector and to interprovincial/international data flows, and they've come out now with C-54, which is a lot more extensive than that.

With respect to the Western Governors' Association, the council of western state governors, there are about four organizations. We do play a role in terms of monitoring them. In fact, an official from my department has been at the western governors' meetings. I'm going to be attending both the western governors' and western legislators' I think this year. One's in June and one's in July. We're going to increase the level of involvement we have there, but we have had departmental officials participate in those meetings. In addition, we've certainly raised our profile. I've had discussions, for example, with the U.S. ambassador and the U.S. consul general about whether there's a possibility of moving to a provincial Premiers/western governors' meeting in the same manner as the Atlantic Premiers and Atlantic governors meet on an annual basis.

We're not there yet. There are a number of issues which might get in the way of such meetings - i.e., the relationship between the state of Washington and the province of British Columbia - but we've initiated meetings. We met with the governor of Montana in December. The Premier, the minister of agriculture, and I went down to Montana to meet with the governor. We met with the governors of Washington and Oregon in early January and in each case talked about cross-border initiatives and about having meetings dealing mainly with border issues between a group of U.S. governors and the western Premiers or certainly with our Premier. So we are engaging in those areas. We have to look at which forums are the most practical and can achieve the most results.

Compliance with international conventions is always an interesting area. In particular we have, for example, the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. Of course, the federal government has been reporting on that. I think there have been two reports since that was ratified by the federal government. With respect to Alberta they do the analysis on Alberta's compliance, and their report has been very positive about Alberta's compliance.

With respect to the MAI, I visited the OECD in Paris in July, actually, and in Germany met with the incoming chair of the MAI negotiations to deal directly with respect to issues under the MAI. We have concerns, and we expressed concerns. I made a statement in the House with respect to our position with respect to the MAI last year. My understanding of the MAI is that at the OECD level it's not progressing and probably will not be progressing. If the issues relating to the MAI are to come up again, they will likely come up under the auspices of the World Trade Organization, which

in our view is a more appropriate forum for them in any event.

With respect to FOIP requests, we've had two formal requests. We've complied with both of them. We tended to provide people with information when they ask for it, so they don't tend to turn into FOIP requests, and that seems to have worked so far. In terms of training there are two training sessions today with our FOIP co-ordinators and staff in the department in terms of freedom of information, protection of privacy provisions. We've reduced from two FOIP co-ordinators, because one was in intergovernmental and one was in aboriginal. With the merger of the departments, we have one. So we're up to date on those.

With respect to the Chinese consulate, with respect to the human rights issues we are very careful in Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs because we take great pride and pleasure in pointing to the federal government when they're playing in our sandbox. We also try, then, to make sure that we don't play in theirs. International human rights issues are clearly the forte of the federal government, and we abide by the position that they take in international matters. It's clear in Canada that people have a right to demonstrate and protest, and we certainly would not engage in anything which would limit that right other than questions of safety, and that I think we leave to the police forces. To my knowledge we don't have any involvement in that whatsoever, but if there's a need for a further response to that, we'll certainly provide it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've been patiently awaiting my turn to question the minister. This is another of the smaller departments in the cabinet, but it is a very vital one. As the minister has outlined, his relations with various levels of government and with different organizations nationally and internationally are of importance and considerable significance.

I believe I'm going to start in the business plan. I note that you were working on some regulatory and tax issues. The first one is dealing with trucking complaints, and I assume that these trucking complaints are to deal with interprovincial trucking and not international trucking or trade across the border, naturally with America. If you could let us know what is the number one complaint that you receive or that you have this dispute resolution mechanism for. What companies are involved in this, and what goods are they transporting?

MR. HANCOCK: Could I ask you where you're . . .

MR. MacDONALD: I'm sorry, Mr. Minister. I'm on page 220 of your business plan, recommendation 2.

While you're looking at that one - and I know time is of the essence here - there's also recommendation 6, where you're talking about trade liberalization and harmonization. The word harmonization has considerable interest to a lot of hon. members who are present here this evening, with possibly the exception of one hon. member, because it's a harmonization that would concern, for instance, the pine shake, both treated and untreated.

This product and the International Congress of Building Officials, or the ICBO as it's affectionately called, recommended - and it was a recommendation that was not listened to by various government departments - that all standards of this product be harmonized. They were quite blunt in their assessment of this. Before they would allow it on the American market, the International Congress of Building Officials said that this product must be harmonized with their building codes, and this was not done. You as well as I know



the problem the province is in, and the homeowners of this province are very angry that there was no harmonization of this product with other building codes.

9:17

This also leads us to the question of: what is your department doing in regards to the National Building Code? We're looking at the National Building Code; we're looking at the Canadian Standards Association. These are organizations which are responsible for setting standards nationally. If you're going to look at a government department which is going to be responsible for harmonization of all these standards, considering what has happened in the last eight years with the authorization and promotion by various government departments of a building product that was never adequately tested, what are you doing to ensure that this doesn't happen again? This is an important question, and it is one way that I believe the intergovernmental affairs department could ensure that the next generation of homeowners in Alberta will not be saddled with the same repair costs as this generation of Albertans are.

We have to look at how our building codes are developed. The National Building Code would not allow this product. The manufacturers in this province were dissatisfied with the fact that it would take six years for a product to be written into the National Building Code, so they went ahead and got authorization for this in a different manner. You and members from your department would be doing a great service to the consumers of this province if you could ensure that this does not happen again. There are certainly ways to ensure that this does not happen, and if you would like my help on this issue, I would be delighted to provide it.

Now, also in the business plan, on page 219, we are looking at growth summit responses. This pleases me, that finally there's going to be some acknowledgment of the growth summit and its recommendations. This was of course the granddaddy of all summits. This government has more summits than the Canadian Rockies, but no one is listening. No one is keenly interested in promoting the recommendations of these various summits.

You were talking here about the national child benefit program - I'm pleased to see my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview here because this is an issue that she talks about with passion and with interest - and how it has been changed by Family and Social Services to develop Alberta's position regarding people with very modest means. People could say it is clawing back.

You were talking about implementing wage subsidy programs for low-income workers and to promote labour force attachment. If you could elaborate as to what your plans are there, I would very grateful.

On page 217 of the same business plan I see you're going to have a Team Canada 1999 mission. I would like to know where you are going, who is going with you, and what Alberta products you are going to be promoting.

Also, on page 214 in your key business plan initiatives you are talking about institutional reform. Here you say you're going to "pursue initiatives to improve the functioning of the federation including reform of the Senate, other institutions and financial arrangements." Now, I would like to hear your ideas on Senate reform, and I would also like to know if this includes a discussion paper on judicial reform and the selection of judges. It's in your key business plan initiatives. I'm looking at page 214 again.

On page 212 you're involved with other departments, and that's a very good thing, I believe. In other interdepartmental initiatives, we're talking about seniors' policies. You are going to be "working with officials from Community Development to provide input and

advice into the long term strategy for seniors." What is this long-term strategy for seniors? Does this include housing policies? Does it include perhaps some form of financial assistance? How is it linked with the social union framework? If you could answer that in due time, I would be very grateful.

And you're also talking here about climate change. I guess my question is quite simple, Mr. Chairman. What do the hon. minister and his department know about the weather that the rest of us do not? Climate change strategy: that's interesting. With all your duties, now you have time to study the weather as well. This is terrific, I think.

Over on page 208 of your business plan: "Advance Alberta's positions in Ottawa and internationally on priority issues." You're talking about "agricultural trade liberalization, oil sands investment, visa issues." If you could answer, Mr. Minister, for myself and my colleagues: what sort of visa issues does your department deal with? Do you seek professionals from other countries or other jurisdictions that we're short of in Alberta? Do you help them gain admittance to this province? Do you check their professional credentials? Have you encountered any problems with, by, or for professional engineers? I understand there are a lot of professional engineers in this province who are at the moment having difficulty finding work, while with NAFTA there are lot of engineers coming from other countries. There is resentment by Canadian-trained engineers that they cannot find employment. If you are dealing with this issue, I would be grateful if you could share that with us.

You were talking also about co-ordinating Alberta's participation in World Trade Organization negotiations on issues involving provincial jurisdiction. You mentioned the environment, and you mentioned labour. I would like to know if your department is in co-ordination with anyone else, any other government departments, regarding the training in other countries of people who are going to be qualified under the Alberta trade certificate programs. There are community colleges, and NAIT and SAIT I understand have satellite courses offered in countries. I would like to know what assistance your department is providing those community colleges and these organizations such as NAIT and SAIT.

I have a few other questions for the minister. We all know - and this is an economic statistic that concerns me - that for five consecutive quarters in Japan we have seen a shrinking economy. We all know the significant role that the increase in trade has played in the prosperity of this province. How is your ministry helping Alberta companies deal with the volatile international trading market, particularly the Asia Pacific region, which is so important, as I said, to many Alberta companies but a region that is still experiencing economic difficulties?

Another question, Mr. Minister: why is there a 22 percent increase in funding for Canadian intergovernmental relations? How will this money be spent? What new initiatives will be undertaken with this spending? What steps is your ministry taking to contribute to the nationwide goal of encouraging national unity, particularly discussions with the province of Quebec? How are you putting forward Alberta's position on this important issue?

9:27

Why, Mr. Minister, is there only a 0.3 percent increase in funding for corporate services? Given that a strategy outlined in the business plan is to implement the social union framework - and we spoke of this a little earlier - is there any plan to consult with Albertans in order to determine how they feel about the social union and to use this information to inform and facilitate future discussions?

Given the strategy that is outlined in the business plan here, "to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the federation

through . . . the reform of institutions," how are you going to encourage Senate reform while building a national consensus around the issue?

Given that a strategy outlined in the business plan is to "consult and work with private and public sector organizations to pursue the benefits of freer trade," what specific measures will your department take to start these consultations?

Given that intergovernmental affairs is included in the office of the Premier in both British Columbia and Ontario, which used to be the case, I understand, in this province, has your government, the government that claims to support smaller government, given any consideration to combining intergovernmental operations with the Premier's office or the Executive Council office?

We see that your staff has increased by four this year. Without considering aboriginal affairs, I believe this is an overmanaged department. You know, in addition to your deputy minister, who has a salary of slightly over \$100,000, in the intergovernmental affairs section you have an assistant deputy minister with slightly less salary and four executive directors, and their salaries are \$80,000 plus. The department, I understand, also has 31 other managers with an average salary of close to \$70,000. Why does such a small department need so many highly paid managers? I realize certainly how we've got untreated and treated pine shakes into the Alberta Building Code. It is a very complex issue. Considering the importance of that issue on so many homeowners, perhaps one of these individuals is going to be working full-time on this issue in the future to ensure that it doesn't happen again. I don't know.

Given that your department also has identified effective, targeted international missions as a key project to strengthen international relations, can you comment on the benefits that Albertans received through the recent excursion to Mexico? Now, I should exclude health care on that, but I won't. You can give me all the goods.

Can you also update us on the activities of the Alberta government's advisory committee on governance projects? It was designated to play a major role in determining the breadth and scope of the government's participation and activities dealing with the international financial institutions like the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency. They focus their development programs on how countries build their capacity for self-governance. What role is your department playing in this?

One last question I have is: what role is your department playing in the development of the unique opportunities that are being presented to the individual stock exchanges across the country, in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver? If you've had any active participation in that initiative, I would be keen to hear it.

With all due respect, if you cannot provide an answer this evening, that's fine. You and your able staff can respond in writing, if you so wish.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, do you wish to answer these questions, or do you wish to get some more questions?

MR. HANCOCK: No. I certainly think I can deal with most of these questions, because the global answer to almost all of the questions asked by Edmonton-Gold Bar is that he clearly doesn't understand the role of intergovernmental affairs. I've tried to explain this in terms of estimates before, in the past. With our committee system he may not have been here for them.

Intergovernmental affairs co-ordinates activity. Where more than one department is involved, intergovernmental affairs quite often will co-ordinate the activity of the Alberta government relating to federal or intergovernmental initiatives. Where an initiative is within the purview of a ministry and where it's a bilateral discus-

sion, quite often the ministries themselves would handle those discussions. When you get into questions, for example, of building code issues, that falls clearly and squarely in the purview of the Department of Labour, so it wouldn't be necessary for intergovernmental affairs to necessarily be involved in that discussion.

I was very keenly interested in how you were going to bring pine shakes into the discussion of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs. As you know, I would dearly love to be able to give an answer on the pine shakes issue, that the people in my constituency would have compensation. As you know from attending most of my meetings in my constituency on pine shakes, I've been a very strong advocate on the pine shakes issue and have been working very hard to bring pine shakes questions to the government's attention and to deal with the concerns of my constituents relating to the financial burden that they're facing as a result of the pine shakes issue.

However, it clearly doesn't fall within the purview of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs. It's clearly an issue within the Labour department in terms of building codes. The estimates for Labour I believe are tomorrow night, and they've also been designated for Thursday afternoon. So I find it rather interesting that you would use up the time of the committee on pine shakes in Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs when it's obvious on the surface that we have no role in that area whatsoever.

With respect to the growth summit responses and finally some response, I would ask you to go back and check the record, because the government representative to the growth summit, who I believe was the Member for Calgary-Egmont - and I'll use his name just in case I got the constituency wrong: Mr. Herard - has compiled responses from all the departments to all of the recommendations of the growth summit. It's been clearly put out in the public domain. The responses are there. Each department in the business plans this year has again taken the recommendations that may have anything to do with their department and indicated what they're doing on them.

Clearly, we serve on interdepartmental committees on any one of a number of items, the seniors' issues that you raised, for example. Well, seniors' issues fall clearly and squarely within Community Development. There are areas, for example, in the aboriginal affairs side where we can add some insight and expertise, so we're happy to serve on an interdepartmental committee to do that. I can give you sort of chapter and verse of our involvement in those sorts of things in answers to the questions, but the bottom line is that with most of the questions that you're dealing with here, you should be looking to the departments which have the primary area of responsibility rather than Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.

We play a co-ordinating role. We play a role when three or four departments are involved in an issue with the federal government or with other provincial governments, such as the social union process. We're involved very heavily in those types of processes. But when it's clearly a bilateral issue between Labour and the departments responsible for seniors or those sorts of things, we don't.

Now, with respect to the area of harmonization, as an example, we've played an active role over the last number of years in working with Environmental Protection on the environmental harmonization accord. That might be one area where we'd step out of that box because it does impact on other departments, so we've been involved with them on that particular issue.

Your first question with respect to regulation and tax issues and the trucking complaints. We've worked with Transportation to set up forums. For example, we've taken issues to the Western Premiers' Conferences with respect to the northern transportation corridor and with respect to initiating discussions with B.C. with respect to harmonization of trucking regulations and issues and concerns, primarily, in this case, coming out of the Peace country

relating to trade issues around that. So we do have a role to play on those trucking and regulatory issues. But, again, we tend to assist Transportation and Utilities on an area of specific concern of that nature. We're working with them, as well, on things like the Canamex corridor.

9:37

In terms of international relations, you're talking about the cross border being north/south as well as east/west. We have certainly played a relationship role in talking with state governments north/south and working with Transportation to help harmonize regulations on the trade corridor.

With respect to Team Canada 1999, where Team Canada is going to go in 1999 is still under negotiation between the federal government and the provinces. They're zeroing in on an area, but of course until they've actually finalized where they're going to go, we won't have a definitive answer for you on that. In terms of who's going to go, that will of course depend on where they're going, and what products we're going to be promoting will also depend on where they're going.

MR. MacDONALD: Pine shakes.

MR. HANCOCK: No. We won't be advocating pine shakes, treated or untreated.

I can tell you that we take a very active interest and a very active involvement in attempting to develop a three-year calendar, for example, as to where we think we should be going and then encouraging the federal government and their Team Canada initiative to go to places that we would think would be important for Alberta and Alberta companies.

In terms of institutional reform, the Senate elections last fall were a good start in terms of raising the issue and public awareness and keeping it on the table. We are encouraging public forums. I'd certainly encourage Senator Roche in his initiative to bring an intellectual forum together. He's requested I think it's the constitutional forum at the university to encourage discussion. Quite frankly I think that's the type of discussion which needs to happen now so that there can be a broad national consensus built over the question of what kind of Senate reform and how it might be accomplished. It's very evident I think to all players that we're not going to do constitutional reform in the short term.

In terms of issues that we're going to be able to get the Canadian players together on, constitutional reform, achieving Senate reform in the Constitution, is not a short-term project, but it is still a project that we're interested in. We're working and we're encouraging public discussion to heighten the awareness of the need for Senate reform, the benefits of Senate reform to Alberta and to all of Canada.

With respect to climate change, that's one of the areas that you touched on in terms of the cross-department initiatives, and you were focusing on a number of the cross-department initiatives. That's one of the things that I think we can be very proud of as a government, that we're knocking down the barriers and stovepipes between departments and working on a lot of cross-departmental initiatives. It means that the program delivery aspect is still very much with the resident department that's responsible for it. But climate change is a perfect example of where Energy, Environmental Protection, Intergovernmental Affairs, science, research, and information technology, and now Transportation - and the chair of our cabinet committee is the chair of the standing policy committee on sustainable development. We're working very cohesively to develop and to communicate a climate change strategy.

The table where most of the discussion took place in the early

portion, the lead-up to Kyoto, was at the joint council of energy and environment ministers, but Intergovernmental Affairs has certainly played a role, I directly with my counterpart in Ottawa, in communicating some of the significant areas of concern that we have with respect to positions the federal government has taken, and also we've played a very active role in terms of working with the cabinet committee in setting up and working with AEDA on developing the climate change roundtable that's going to be happening at the end of April.

We participated in a number of ways. For example, in my mission to Europe last summer I met with the Climate Change Secretariat of the United Nations in Bonn, Germany, and discussed some of the issues and concerns around the climate change issue relating to Alberta's position. As well, when I was in Oregon with the trade mission there in January, we met with energy officials and other officials in the state of Oregon who have some very interesting climate change initiatives happening down there.

We were able to bring back some of that knowledge and information to the climate change discussion in Alberta, and it's just, I guess, a perfect example of where issues aren't necessarily owned by one department. If they're cross-department, we work together intergovernmentally, and that's why you see IAA's name in relationship to other issues on the table. But the climate change issue is a particularly significant one, because we have played a fairly significant role in developing the government position on that particular topic.

With respect to the World Trade Organization, clearly the World Trade Organization discussions that are starting up, particularly as they centre around agriculture, are going to be very important for Alberta. Alberta has taken a lead role in trying to liberalize trade both nationally and internationally. We've certainly worked very hard to demonstrate to not only Canada and North America but to the world that removing barriers to trade provides opportunity for the marketplace to really build a strong economy. The annual reports put out by the western economic research group at the University of Alberta clearly show that trade has improved dramatically in Alberta as a result of the free trade agreement. So we work very hard on that, and we will be co-ordinating with Agriculture and with other departments. We will be providing the federal government with our best advice and information as to what position the federal government should be taking at that World Trade table.

You queried as to what we do with respect with visas. Just to give you one example, we have many educational institutions in this province which are world renowned both in terms of exporting their product, if you can call education a product - educational programming I guess would be better way to describe it - to those countries with students coming here to study. For example, a year ago last August when I was in Beijing, one of the things that we did was to meet with the visa unit in the Canadian embassy in Beijing to talk to them about problems with Chinese students obtaining visas to come to study in Canada. The delays in the visa unit are unconscionable. The criteria that they use are inappropriate and outdated, and they provided barriers. We met with them to talk directly about it and have also communicated in conjunction with the minister of advanced education, whose area, again, this falls into.

There are very few areas that fall exclusively into the domain of Intergovernmental Affairs, but we've communicated with the federal minister responsible to let her know that the way the visa units around the world are operating, on the basis of outdated information, is not conducive to our doing things like promoting the educational opportunities that we have here.

Those educational opportunities provide a good opportunity for us to build long-term relationships because the students that study here

go back to their countries, for the most part, and we can build on the long-term relationships there. So it's very much important for us, in terms of our role in building international relations, to make sure that we have those opportunities available to us.

With respect to the five successive quarters of economic slump in Japan. As I mentioned, we deal with international trade policy, but we also deal with international relations issues, and one of the things we know about the situation in Japan is that it's going to turn around, and when it turns around, the people there will know and appreciate that Alberta has had a constant presence, that we have continued to carry out our relationships. We're not fair-weather friends. Just because the economy is down there doesn't mean that we have stopped promoting trade relations.

For example, we've had a very good relationship with the consul general, Mr. Ise, who's now going back to Japan. We had a farewell reception for him just the other day. That relationship, that international diplomacy, if you will, is very, very important to building the long-term relationships which make it possible for our companies to continue to do business. Again, as an example, when I was in Hokkaido, our sister province, a year ago last summer, we met with a number of people, toured a number of building sites. As a result of some of even the chance meetings we had, business opportunities have been able to develop.

9:47

What are we doing for national unity? Well, the Francophone Secretariat is a good example of the types of initiatives we want to take to continue to show that we have a commitment to the country. We have a commitment to the fundamental values and underpinnings of the country, and we want to build on the messages we heard from the national unity consultation that was undertaken a year ago.

We work very closely with the province of Quebec in many of the interprovincial negotiations. In fact, at many of those tables our position and Quebec's position are very, very similar. Even in the social union discussions of recent date we were very, very closely aligned with Quebec's position on many of the issues. I think Alberta plays a leadership role in providing harmony in the country at an interprovincial negotiations level.

That leads to the social union framework, what we're going to be doing with respect to consultations. Well, of course, we're constantly consulting Albertans on issues of importance to them, and one of the fundamental elements of the social union that resulted I think largely as a result of Alberta's intervention at that table is the concept that we will be tested on the programs and on the results which we try to achieve under the social union agreement.

The social union agreement provides for us to set national standards by agreement among the provinces, and we'll look to measure achievement against those standards. But it's not an achievement measure that will be tested by the federal government. It's an achievement measure that will be tested by our own electorate, by the public of Alberta. The communication of what's in the social agreement is there. The council of ministers will continue to develop that, and of course we will in the time-honoured tradition of this government continue to consult with Albertans as that process evolves.

Being included in the office of the Premier. Some provinces have included their Intergovernmental Affairs in the office of the Premier. In fact, as the member has pointed out, that happened here. It's really a question that's determined by the Premier in terms of setting up his cabinet, who he wants to appoint and what departments, and I wouldn't presume to tell the Premier how the government should be organized. I would point out that there are many intergovernmental affairs departments across the country, not

the least of which, for example, is in Ontario. Saskatchewan has a Department of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.

I think that from the discussion even tonight one could conclude that there are many diverse issues in this department: trade policy, both international and domestic; Canadian federalism issues; aboriginal self-reliance; aboriginal land claims. The range of issues is diverse, and I can tell you that they keep me very busy, and if they were subsumed under the auspices of the Premier's office, I'm not sure that they would have the opportunity to deal with all of the issues in the same manner we can in this way. But governments do get reorganized from time to time. Who knows what the next iteration might be?

One of the concerns that comes up from time to time - and the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has raised it again tonight - is what I might synopsise by saying, an overmanaged department. Again, from that comment - and I don't mean to be unkind by saying this - I think he doesn't understand the way the department operates or the role of the department. We do not deliver any programs, and therefore we do not have all of the line staff and all of the staffing operations that are necessary to deliver programs. But we do operate at a very high level in terms of interprovincial discussion and policy development, and to operate at that high level, you have to have qualified people. In a government structure that means you have to pay them, and you have to pay them at an appropriate level, so we end up with a significant number of people at the manager's level. There's no more explanation than that. They're being paid at a manager's level, but because they have the title of manager doesn't mean they have to have a whole lot of people to manage. What they are managing are issues and policy development, so we have the people we need at the appropriate level.

The pine shakes don't belong in this department. I wish they did. I'd like to deal with that issue more directly than I can at this stage.

Effective targeted missions in Mexico. Twenty-five companies went on the recent mission to the Pacific Northwest and to Mexico. Just as an example, a Calgary company signed a \$3 million deal to supply natural gas conversion kits.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, I think your 20 minutes are up.

The chair has a conundrum for the group. I have two individuals who have indicated in one way or another that they have a few questions for the few minutes that remain to us. I wonder if we could have those two questioners succeed one another before . . .

Okay. The hon. Member for Drumheller-Chinook.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Well, my comments are very, very brief. My constituents are interested in the reduction in trade barriers, primarily progress within Canada. I think there's a good understanding. Also the areas of cross-border disputes and the ability to settle those, and I would certainly be happy to get a note just on an update on that.

The other area I just wanted to comment on, in reading the business plan and looking at it, was the development of measures that focus on the well-being of the aboriginal population. I would be interested in knowing more about the development of those measures. You're aware that we're involved with the future leaders program, with an aboriginal sports policy program, with an area in culture in an attempt to bring some opportunities in those areas and perhaps build self-esteem and self-reliance, which will lead to many of the other areas. So I would be interested in some more information on the development of those measures. I also would like your comment on the importance of exchanges with other countries - sports, cultural, academic - and the tracking of the success, or not - I think it rather is success - in those areas in the development of relationships for economic and other reasons.

Just a compliment to your staff on their assistance when you are preparing for a mission to another country. I think that work is invaluable to people who are traveling. And a compliment on your success in the discussions around the social union. The recognition of a per capita funding on the CHS transfer to this province is phenomenal. I believe it has been 1990 since that changed.

With that, I'll leave the rest of the time to someone else, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for letting me in.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

The hon. member for Edmonton-Riverview.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I recognize that there are only a few minutes left this evening, so I will make my questions very succinct.

To the hon. minister. This issue is not referenced in the annual report of intergovernmental affairs this year; however, we are aware that the Premier has sent a declaration to the federal government with respect to the UN declaration on the rights of the child. We would be interested, I and my colleagues, in how this government will comply with article 44 of that declaration. If the minister is not familiar with that article, it is a requirement that parties undertake to submit to the committee through the secretary-general of the United Nations reports on the measures they have adopted which will give effect to the rights recognized herein and the progress made on the enjoyment of those rights. I would hope that in subsequent reports that can be referenced and the steps taken to accomplish that provided.

I am aware that my previous colleagues have focused a great deal on the intergovernmental affairs portion, and I would just raise a request. With respect to the impact to citizens in the province with respect to internal trade and the MAI and particularly with respect to the social union, I have not seen the type of information disseminated from this department as has been the case in Treasury over the course of the last 10 days or two weeks, where a substantial expenditure of public funds has been utilized to advertise the tax regime that this government is promoting. I would respectfully request that we put similar attention in place to identify to Albertans what the social union, the internal trade agreement, and the potential MAI has with respect to impacts on their daily lives and their working lives.

9:57

To conclude, then, just by talking about aboriginal issues. The minister has referenced in his annual report the sociodemographic trends and secondary indicators. Those, although they are referenced, are not provided, and I would share the minister's request that they should be provided in more detail. I think they would be extremely helpful not only to the opposition but to the authorities that are at work in this province attempting to deliver services to this population.

I did want to note as well the measures that have been incorporated in the annual report with respect to aboriginal well-being and just point out a couple of what I see as being discrepancies. With respect to the figure "36% of the total Child Welfare Status caseload were Aboriginal children," that had to have been a selected percentage, because we know that in some or most regions - I believe region 4

is one of the lowest, but region 8, region 10, region 12, and region 16 are all over 50 percent. Fifty percent of their aboriginal children are in care. So to choose a 36 percent figure is a bit misleading in that respect, I would submit. Certainly if policies exist - and this is also referenced in the annual report - with respect to the department surrounding aboriginal children, I would also request that they be provided.

Finally, just a comment. I recall during the fall's debate on Bill 37 that the minister looked extremely perplexed and at some times agitated with respect to how Bill 37 would interrelate with internal trade in the North American free trade agreement. I note that on page 204 when we talk about internal trade and co-ordinating Alberta's participation in the agreement on internal trade to reduce barriers to trade, investment, and labour mobility through negotiations, we don't speak about that perhaps explicitly in a public-sector context. I may be wrong and I may fall into the same category as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar in not understanding your role, but I would think that it should be intergovernmental affairs that takes the leadership role in defining how legislation would be applied and implemented or what impacts would occur under that legislation with respect to the internal trade agreements and the North American free trade agreement that we are party to.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to raise those questions this evening. Thank you.

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Chairman, obviously I won't be able to answer all of the questions that the last two speakers have raised, but I would want to touch on one thing. I was looking neither perplexed nor agitated in the Legislature but rather wishing that I'd had an opportunity to get in and explain to the members opposite that Bill 37 has absolutely nothing to do with the free trade agreement.

The free trade agreement has clear exemptions for health care. Even if the worst case scenario they dreamed up were to be allowed - and that was that a governing body of some sort or the minister were to approve a private health facility - that would clearly be approved on its own merits, and that approval in itself would not be the approval which opened the door to other approvals automatically. So it's clear that Bill 37 or any iteration of Bill 37 will not allow people to come in under NAFTA and open the doors.

I would enjoy the opportunity to provide a much more definitive answer to the member on that basis, and the rest of them I'll take under advisement and provide answers later.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. I move that the committee do now rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

THE CHAIRMAN: Accordingly, we have to reassemble downstairs in the Chamber.

[The committee adjourned at 10:02 p.m.]

