Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Indigenous Relations

Tuesday, October 28, 2025
9 a.m.

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Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC), Deputy Chair

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* substitution for Court Ellingson
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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Thomas Djurfors, Assistant Deputy Minister, Consultation, Land and Policy
Don Kwas, Assistant Deputy Minister, First Nations and Metis Relations
Kristina Midbo, Executive Director, Indigenous Women's Initiatives
Shakeeb Siddiqui, Assistant Deputy Minister and Senior Financial Officer, Financial Services
Donavon Young, Deputy Minister

9 a.m. **Tuesday, October 28, 2025**

[Mr. Sabir in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. I would like to call this meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Irfan Sabir, the MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall and chair of the committee. As we begin this morning, I would like to invite members, guests, and LAO staff at the table to introduce themselves, and we will begin to my right.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell, MLA for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Wiebe: Ron Wiebe, MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mrs. Sawyer: Tara Sawyer, MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Lunty: Good morning, everyone. Brandon Lunty, MLA for Leduc-Beaumont.

Ms Midbo: Good morning. Kristina Midbo, executive director of the Indigenous women's initiatives division with Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Kwas: Good morning. My name is Don Kwas. I'm the assistant deputy minister of First Nations and Métis relations with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Young: Good morning, everyone. Donavon Young, Deputy Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Siddiqui: Good morning, everyone. Shakeeb Siddiqui, senior financial officer.

Mr. Djurfors: Good morning, everyone. I'm Thomas Djurfors, assistant deputy minister for consultation, land and policy with Indigenous Relations.

Ms Hayes: Good morning. Patty Hayes, Assistant Auditor General.

Mr. Schmidt: Marlin Schmidt, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

Member Eremenko: Good morning. MLA for Calgary-Currie, Janet Eremenko.

Ms Robert: Good morning. Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and Committees.

Mr. Huffman: Warren Huffman, committee clerk.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to those joining us online. Please introduce yourself as the clerk calls your name.

Ms Lovely: Good morning, everyone. Jackie Lovely, MLA for the Camrose constituency.

Ms de Jonge: Good morning. Chantelle de Jonge, MLA for Chestermere-Strathmore.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will note for the record the following substitutions: Mr. Wiebe for hon. Mr. McDougall, Member Eremenko for Mr. Ellingson, Mrs. Sawyer for Mrs. Johnson, and Ms Lovely for hon. Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and videostream and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Those participating by videoconference are encouraged to please turn on your camera while speaking and mute your microphone when not speaking. Members participating virtually who wish to be placed on a speakers list are asked to e-mail or send a message to the committee clerk, and members in the room are asked to please signal to the chair. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting. Comments at all times should flow through the chair.

Hon. members, are there any changes or additions to the agenda? If not, would a member move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the proposed agenda as distributed for its October 28, 2025, meeting? Moved by MLA Rowswell. All in favour? Any opposed? All in favour joining us online? Any opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

We have minutes from the October 21, 2025, meeting of the committee. Do members have any errors or omissions to note? Go ahead.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do have a couple of omissions that I'd like to highlight from last meeting's minutes. The minutes do note that on October 21 the UCP members of this committee voted to make no recommendations on the Auditor General's condition of affordable housing report, but what the minutes omit is that by doing so, government members have failed to uphold their responsibility to the public by allowing the department to continue doing nothing about the condition of public housing in Alberta.

Public Accounts exists for one purpose: to follow the dollars, demand answers, and drive improvements so that public services work for people. The Auditor General's report documents deteriorating housing stock, mounting maintenance backlogs, and inconsistent oversight that leaves seniors and families waiting in unsafe or unstable conditions. By refusing to issue recommendations, the UCP is telling those Albertans that their safety and dignity do not matter.

Affordable housing is public infrastructure. When roofs leak and boilers fail, people get sick, kids miss school, and we all pay the price. Accountability is how we prevent that. Government backbenchers chose to look away; the NDP won't. We will stand with tenants, nonprofits, and front-line staff to ensure that this report leads to repairs, not excuses, and to results that Albertans can see unit by unit, family by family.

The minutes also note that the government members voted to cancel the November 18 session. What the minutes omit is that audit-focused meetings were the choice of the government members. That's where the hard questions get asked in public and on the record. Scrapping this hearing shields decision-makers from scrutiny, buries lessons the report demands we learn, and signals to every other department that no one is going to hold them accountable for their failure to deliver results for the people of Alberta.

We also know that the Auditor General is reviewing the DynaLife contract and procurement practices in the health system, reviews that have a high potential for revealing government corruption. The minutes omit that by voting to end the November 18 Auditor General focused meeting, the government also intends to prevent this committee from reviewing those reports when they become available.

Mr. Lunty: Point of order.

Mr. Schmidt: I conclude my remarks, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Lunty: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to call two points of order. I don't know if you'd like them separately or together. I'll start with 23(b). The member was speaking to matters other than the question under discussion by providing an editorial after the fact on meeting minutes. The PAC meeting minutes, of course, reflect the discussion of the last committee meeting. The point of meeting minutes is not to add on a separate soliloquy or editorial. So this is a point of order, 23(b). Those comments were not relevant to our meeting minutes. I understand the member may very well feel that way or may take the opportunity, to the media or in the House, to express those sentiments, but the opportunity to correct our meeting minutes is certainly not the place to do that.

In addition, Mr. Chair, I would also like to call a point of order, 23(i), imputes false or unavowed motives to another member. The member opposite made several claims against the opposition members and the government members and members on this committee about his opinion on our commitment to some of the topics that were discussed last time. Again, the member is within his right to feel that way but is not in the right to accuse our members of the actions that he was pointing out when it comes to the government business that was discussed last time.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for an opportunity to respond. It's remarkable that this member has been on this committee for at least two years and refuses to understand how points of order work. He keeps raising these points of order that aren't actually points of order. You know, I expect that the government will walk into the House at some point in the near future and amend the standing orders so that hurt feelings become a point of order because that's exactly what this member is complaining about today.

My comments were in regard to omissions that I felt appeared in the meeting minutes, and it's well within my rights as a member of this committee to raise those omissions that I think should have been included in the meeting minutes.

With respect to the member's point of order with 23(i) I didn't single out any particular member for doing anything. I painted all of the backbenchers with the same brush, which has been the accepted practice of the Legislature and this committee.

Neither of these things are a point of order, and I ask that the chair rule that they are not points of order.

The Chair: Thank you.

With respect to 23(b), Member, you noted that it's not an opportunity to correct the minutes. I think that's exactly what this agenda item deals with, any errors or omissions. But I didn't really find anything, I guess, omitted from the minutes because minutes are only to reflect the decisions. That was mostly around the context that would be in the *Hansard* of committee proceedings. As such, I do not find this to be completely irrelevant because the member tried to note some omissions, which I guess I do not necessarily think need to be noted in the minutes, so I won't find a point of order.

9:10

With respect to 23(i), imputes a false motive to another member, again, I didn't find any particular member singled out or any false motive imputed to one member, so I will not find this as a point of order, but I guess I would still caution that we can keep our conversation flowing through the chair and make this committee work in a more respectful manner.

At this point I still need somebody to move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the minutes as distributed of its meeting held on October 21, 2025. Moved by MLA Rowswell. Any discussion on the motion? Seeing none, all in favour? Any opposed? All in favour joining us online? Anyone opposed? The ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Chair, before we get into the discussion with Indigenous Relations, I have a motion that I'd like to move if I could.

The Chair: Proceed.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. Thank you. Last week, of course, we saw UCP backbenchers walk away from their duty to hold departments to account, and I would like to change the speaking orders to reflect the fact that the UCP backbenchers aren't willing to do the job that Albertans sent them here to do and reflect the fact that we here in the Official Opposition are more than willing to step up and do the job of holding the departments to account. For those reasons, I'm moving that

> the Standing Committee on Public Accounts use the following speaking time allotment for members after opening remarks have been made to the committee by the chair, ministry officials, and the office of the Auditor General: (1) for a one-and-a-half-hour meeting (a) for the first and second rotations of questions 19 minutes for the Official Opposition caucus and one minute for the government caucus, (b) for the third rotation nine minutes for the Official Opposition caucus and one minute for the government caucus, and (c) for the fourth rotation three minutes for each the Official Opposition and government caucuses to read questions into the record for a written response; (2) for a two-hour meeting with a morning sitting (a) for the first rotation of questions 23 minutes for the Official Opposition caucus and one minute for the government caucus, (b) for the second, third, and fourth rotations 17 minutes for the Official Opposition caucus and one minute for the government caucus, and (c) for the fifth rotation three minutes each for the Official Opposition and the government caucuses to read questions into the record for a written response; (3) for a two-hour meeting without a morning sitting (a) for the first rotation of questions 29 minutes for the Official Opposition caucus and one minute for the government caucus, (b) for the second, third, and fourth rotations 19 minutes for the Official Opposition caucus and one minute for the government caucus, and (c) for the fifth rotation three minutes each for the Official Opposition and the government caucuses to read questions into the record for a written response; and (4) for a three-hour meeting (a) for the first and second rotations of questions 29 minutes for the Official Opposition caucus and one minute for the government caucus, (b) for the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth rotations 19 minutes for the Official Opposition caucus and one minute for the government caucus, and (c) for the seventh rotation three minutes each for the Official Opposition and the government caucuses to read questions into the record for a written response.

Mr. Chair, of course, at last week's meeting we saw the government vote to make sure that the Public Accounts Committee doesn't do any work. It's been the practice – we noted this particularly egregiously at the October 14 meeting. The government submits their questions to the department ahead of time, and the department reads the answers that they've prepared. It's obvious to everyone who's watching that the government and the department collude to make sure that nothing of substance happens here at Public Accounts, and I'm sure we'll see that today. I'm sure that we'll see the deputy minister read responses that he's prepared to questions that the government has prepared ahead of time.

Why engage in this circus? We here in the Official Opposition are genuinely committed to the work of holding the departments to account, and I think these speaking times reflect that commitment.

If the government wants to have this back-and-forth circus, they can have it somewhere else. Public Accounts isn't the place to do it. So I urge all members to vote in favour of this motion.

The Chair: Anybody want to respond?

Okay. I think speaking rotations are set by the committee's agreement, so I will just ask the question. All those in favour of changing the speaking rotation as suggested by this motion, please say aye. Those joining us online? All those against the motion that's before the committee? Those joining us online?

The motion is defeated.

I would like to welcome our guests from the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and the office of the Auditor General who are here to address the ministry's annual report 2024-25, the responsibilities under their purview during that reporting period, and relevant reports and outstanding recommendations of the Auditor General. I invite the officials from the ministry to provide opening remarks not exceeding 10 minutes.

Mr. Young: Excellent. Thank you, Chair, and good morning, everyone. Thanks for the opportunity to speak with you today. Again, my name is Donavon Young. I'm the Deputy Minister of Indigenous Relations. To my immediate left is Don Kwas, the ADM of First Nations and Métis relations. Next to Don Kwas is Kristina Midbo from the Sawridge First Nation, executive director of Indigenous women's initiatives. On my right is Shakeeb Siddiqui, who is the assistant deputy minister of finance and the SFO for the department. Next to Shakeeb is Thomas Djurfors, who is the ADM of consultation, land, and policy. We also have some staff members in the gallery who are here to assist in answering any questions.

I'm pleased to provide an update on the Indigenous Relations audit recommendation implementation plan. In May 2022 the OAG recommended that we improve how we measure and report on the outcomes of programs supporting Indigenous economic inclusion. The goal is to help increase participation in initiatives designed to generate long-term revenue streams or to develop supports and programs aligned with the unique priorities of Indigenous communities.

Following the OAG's confirmation and support of the Indigenous Relations implementation plan, we have worked diligently to successfully complete the plan, and I'm happy to say, everyone, that Indigenous Relations has implemented performance measures and targets for all of its programs. By setting performance targets and measures, we can better assess how our programs are working. This includes reviewing feedback from funding recipients, comparing results of what was originally planned, looking at program cost, and checking whether the programs are meeting user needs. We also report on what was achieved and what we learned and how the results support the ministry's overall goals. The OAG will return to evaluate the implementation of the above items. We're proud of the progress that we've made, and we're confident in our readiness for that review.

Now it's our pleasure to speak to the work of Indigenous Relations during the fiscal year 2024-25. Economic reconciliation remains a central focus for our ministry, so I'd like to begin there. In 2024-25 the Aboriginal business investment fund, or ABIF, provided $10 million in capital grants to 20 Indigenous community-owned economic development projects. That is a record number of projects, a direct result of increasing, improving, and promoting this program in recent years. This funding is helping communities grow their economies, create jobs, and build sustainable revenue streams.

9:20

The Indigenous reconciliation initiative is another key program, and it funds both economic and cultural projects. In '24-25 $4 million was provided through the program to support nearly 70 Indigenous-led initiatives, including feasibility studies, strategic planning, wellness programs, and community celebrations.

Our flagship Crown corporation, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, or AIOC, is helping drive more opportunities for Indigenous communities to participate in major investments as owners and partners. The AIOC closed two new investments in '24-25, bringing total loan guarantee support to date to nearly $750 million for 43 Indigenous communities. One of these deals represented the AIOC's first partnership in renewable energy investment. It provided a $22 million loan backstop to Cold Lake First Nation so it could become the majority owner of a new solar farm in Duchess, Alberta. Once the solar plant comes online in 2026, it will power about 7,000 homes.

In October 2024 we expanded the AIOC's mandate to include tourism, and we recently expanded it again to include the technology and health care sectors. These sectors join natural resources, transportation, agriculture, and telecommunications as the industries eligible for AIOC support.

Moving now to Indigenous women's initiatives division, which provided grants through the community support fund to support 24 Indigenous-led projects aimed at improving the safety, well-being, and economic security of Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people. These initiatives are making a real difference, improving the lives of the people this fund was designed to support. This division also serves as the secretariat to the Premier's Council on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit Plus People. The council met nine times in '24-25, engaging experts, organizations, ministries across Alberta's government, and other partners to discuss a wide variety of challenges and potential solutions.

Indigenous women's initiatives also work closely with the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women to administer nearly $1.4 million in grant funding for Indigenous-led actions to end gender-based violence. The First Nation and Métis women's councils on economic security continue to provide advice to address economic security for Indigenous women in Alberta. These are great examples of the effective partnerships we have across government that are helping us address major issues across the province.

This past year our ministry continued to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations. We build relationships in many ways but perhaps most intentionally through protocol and relationship agreements. We have signed formal agreements with the Blackfoot Confederacy, the Stoney Nakoda-Tsuut'ina Tribal Council, Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, and the Metis Settlements General Council, and we're currently working towards a similar agreement with Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta. These agreements facilitate effective and productive collaboration through work plans with relevant ministers and Indigenous leaderships. The results are reported annually at meetings with Premier Smith, ministers, and Indigenous Relations. We also have a framework agreement with the Métis Nation of Alberta. This work is helping shape long-term partnerships and results, ensuring Indigenous voices are reflected in Alberta's government decision-making.

Indigenous Relations continues to support Indigenous communities through the wildfire season, collaborating with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, Indigenous Services Canada, and many other partners to assist affected communities through the response and recovery processes. Last year we also contributed to building emergency response capacity by securing $1 million to fund directors of emergency management on all eight Métis settlements.

Consultation is another cornerstone of the work we do. In '24-25 the ACO, the Aboriginal consultation office, supported 8,400 land and resource development applications, resulting in roughly 11,400

Crown land activities. The ACO also delivered 58 information sessions to industry proponents, Indigenous communities, and other ministries. To support participation in these processes, we provided $6.6 million in Indigenous consultation capacity, funding 60 Indigenous communities. We also provided $1.3 million in Métis credible assertion capacity funding to 10 Métis organizations to help them address capacity challenges related to the credible assertion process. Twenty-four to ’25 also marked the conclusion of Alberta’s obligations under the Canada-Alberta agreement respecting the 2018 land claim settlement for the Lubicon Lake band. This was a historic milestone in the province’s relationship with Indigenous peoples.

Internally we continue to educate public servants through the Indigenous learning initiative in even greater numbers. In ’24-25 we delivered more than 100 sessions, a 20 per cent increase from the previous year, to Alberta public service members. This program builds cultural understanding and supports respectful, informed engagement with Indigenous communities across government and as part of the response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action.

I want to touch on something you may have noticed when you look at our ministry expenditures for ’24-25 versus what was estimated at budget time. There is a $15 million discrepancy, $235 million for the actual but $220 million estimated at budget. The main reason for this was higher gaming revenues collected at government-owned slot machines in First Nations casinos. The gaming revenue is a funding source for the First Nations development fund, or FNDF, that supports economic, social, and community development. Gaming revenue forecasts are provided by Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis, and they are based on consumer trends, which means they can change over time. This can also vary greatly depending on changes in consumer trends. When more people use slot machines in First Nations casinos, the FNDF receives more money to support First Nations projects.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Deputy Minister.

I would now turn it over to the Assistant Auditor General for her comments. Ms Hayes, you have five minutes.

Ms Hayes: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, committee members and officials joining us from the Department of Indigenous Relations, and thank you for the opportunity to provide an overview of the work of the office of the Auditor General. We audit the Department of Indigenous Relations to the extent necessary to support our audit opinion of the province’s consolidated financial statements. We also audit the financial statements of the ministry’s component entity, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, and for the year ended March 31, 2025, we issued a clean opinion for the corporation.

We made no new recommendations to either the department or the corporation based on our ’24-25 financial audit work; however, there is one outstanding recommendation to the department from our May 2022 performance audit on Indigenous economic participation. That audit examined whether the departments of Indigenous Relations and, at the time, labour and immigration had effective processes to assess and report on the results of programs designed to support economic self-reliance and increase participation by Indigenous peoples in Alberta’s economy.

We concluded that while both departments had processes in place to assess and report on program results, not all of these processes were effective and improvements are needed. Without effective monitoring and reporting the Department of Indigenous Relations risks not achieving its planned results and not demonstrating value for taxpayer dollars spent. Long-term goals may be compromised by short-term considerations, and without the right information decisions about what’s working and what needs to change may not be well informed. So we recommended that the department improve its performance-reporting processes for programs aimed at increasing Indigenous economic participation by implementing performance measures and targets for all programs; analyzing program performance, including reporting from funding recipients against user needs, planned results, and program costs; and, finally, reporting its analysis of program results and progress towards ministry outcomes, including lessons learned.

The department has indicated that this recommendation is ready for assessment. We are in the midst of completing an assessment, and we’ll be finished that within the coming months. I want to thank the management group here today for their time, co-operation, and assistance during our work.

That concludes my opening comments, Chair.

9:30

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now hear questions from committee members. We will begin with the Official Opposition caucus. You have 15 minutes.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Page 24 of the annual report states that the department engages in “advocacy for Jordan’s Principle.” In February of 2025 the federal government announced sweeping changes to programs funded according to Jordan’s principle, including funding for educational assistants in Alberta schools. The CBC reported that at least 450 full- and part-time educational assistant job losses resulted because of these funding changes. I’m wondering: did the department advocate to the federal government for continued funding for educational assistants in Alberta schools?

Mr. Young: Thanks for the question. I may turn to Thomas Djurfors in a moment for additional detail, but off the top of my head, we absolutely did. I remember when that issue was raised. We worked with the department of education, in particular the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education branch, to ensure that letters were written from provincial ministers to federal ministers advocating for Jordan’s principle and for, you know, funding to be maintained. So, absolutely, we advocated with the federal government. That is one of the responsibilities of the department, as liaison with the federal government and ensuring that, you know, Indigenous issues are brought to bear.

Thomas, am I missing anything?

Mr. Schmidt: No. Thank you, Deputy Minister. That answers the question. I hope that the deputy minister can table for the committee the letters that the department sent to the federal government just to show that that work happened.

Obviously, the department’s advocacy efforts failed. The government has not reversed their decision to fund these educational assistants through Jordan’s principle. Now, it’s my understanding that Jordan’s principle means that when there is a funding need, one government or the other will step up and provide the funding so that the First Nations students in this case don’t suffer any ill effects of interjurisdictional squabbles, and then you sort out the funding later. Did the Department of Indigenous Relations give advice to Education that Education should step up and fund these educational assistants that were no longer funded by the federal government?

Mr. Young: I can’t recall off the top of my head the exact nature of the advocacy. It likely included a strong recommendation to the federal government to maintain its funding, but, again, I mean, that would be something you’d probably want to put to the ministry of education.

Mr. Schmidt: But as far as the department recalls, you didn't give any advice to the department of education that they should actually meet the spirit of Jordan's principle by funding these EAs in the absence of federal funding?

Mr. Young: As I say, I can't recall off the top of my head if we provided that advice, but we also, you know, really urge the federal government to make . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you.

Mr. Young: Can I finish?

Mr. Schmidt: No. No. I got the answer to my . . .

Mr. Young: Chair, can I finish?

Mr. Schmidt: I got the answer to my question, Deputy Minister.

The Chair: Member, conversation needs to flow through the chair. Go ahead, DM.

Mr. Young: One of our key functions – and we take it very, very seriously – is holding the federal government's feet to the fire to ensure that their fiduciary obligations regarding . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Chair, we don't have a lot of time. I have a lot of questions to get through. I got the answer to the question from the deputy minister that I wanted. You know, my question was regarding the efforts that the deputy minister made to the educational department.

The Chair: Okay. So let's move on.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you very much. I hope that the deputy minister can contact staff who are likely watching these proceedings and find out in response to another question later in the meeting what advocacy efforts the department made to the educational ministry in this department.

I want to move on to the AIOC. The AIOC has provided $750 million in loan guarantees on several projects during its first five years of existence. The stated goal of the corporation is to provide loan guarantees and facilitate investments that pay returns to Indigenous communities. Can the department tell the committee how much financial return these investments have made for Indigenous communities in the '24-25 fiscal year?

Mr. Young: Well, I can tell you that the AIOC estimates that about $1.4 billion in projected distributions will flow to participating Indigenous communities over the lifetime of the projects supported.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Deputy Minister. That information is publicly available on the AIOC website, and that doesn't actually answer the question. How much financial return has been delivered to Indigenous communities in the '24-25 fiscal year?

Mr. Young: The total distribution back to Indigenous communities as of March 31, 2025, is $68,291,064.31.

That's for the fiscal year?

Mr. Kwas: No. That's up to March 31, 2025, from when the first deal came through.

Mr. Schmidt: So that's cumulative.

Mr. Kwas: Yes.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you.

Now, does that meet any targets that the AIOC has had in place for returns achieved by the five-year mark?

Mr. Young: Absolutely, it does. The AIOC has been tremendously successful. I mean, we look at broad milestones. As I say, $1.4 billion in projected distributions over the lifetime of those projects; 43 Indigenous communities have been positively impacted by the AIOC. As government we're very happy with the progress of the AIOC and the headway that it's making and the difference that it's making in the lives of Indigenous people at the community level.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you to the deputy minister.

He said that there are broad milestones, yet he refrained from actually saying whether or not there was a milestone that had been achieved with the $68 million. Certainly, the Auditor General has taken the department to task for not providing meaningful performance measures in its own department. I would suggest that the department also look at AIOC's performance measures and tighten those up.

Now, according to the AIOC's website a potential project called the Aspen project fell through because of structural issues within TC Energy's NGTL partnership. Can the department explain to the committee the details of these structural issues and why it led to a failure to close this deal?

Mr. Young: No, I can't. That was never disclosed by the proponent. They left it as: structural issues were the issue, were the problem. The precise nature of those structural issues was never disclosed.

Mr. Schmidt: In the budget for the '24-25 fiscal year the department anticipated closing this deal and, in fact, booked revenue or had budgeted revenue from AIOC's loan guarantees because they expected to close this deal. So when TC Energy said, "We can't do it," what work did the AIOC do to understand exactly why that deal failed and what they can do to maybe advance that deal or make another deal of a similar magnitude successful in the future?

Mr. Young: Well, they actually did do that work that you just mentioned. I know – at the moment I'm not able to comment because it's not in the public realm – that there are a couple of deals in the very near pipeline of the AIOC in related areas that, hopefully, will come to fruition in the next few months. I think then you will see the good work of the AIOC that continues to benefit Indigenous communities.

Mr. Schmidt: But we won't see any lessons learned from the failure of this particular deal. Is that what the deputy minister is telling the committee?

Mr. Young: Well, you have to also remember that this was not an AIOC issue or problem. This was at TC Energy. TC Energy pulled the plug on the deal because of a structural issue. This was not caused by the AIOC.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, then, I would expect that the deputy minister would be more willing to talk about exactly why the AIOC failed to close this deal if it wasn't, in fact, their fault.

Now, I want to move on to another issue. According to the AIOC's annual report the CEO's salary went from $311,000 in 2024 to $347,000 in a year. That's a 12 per cent increase. In fact, $36,000 a year is more than what an educational assistant makes. Given that this government just legislated a 3 per cent annual increase for teachers, what has the department done to rein in skyrocketing executive compensation at the AIOC?

9:40

Mr. Young: Well, the department, first of all, does not oversee public-sector compensation.

Mr. Schmidt: If I can stop the department there. Correct me if my understanding is wrong. The department appoints the board of the AIOC, and the AIOC and board answers to the deputy minister. Is that correct?

Mr. Young: Wrong.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Then tell me . . .

Mr. Young: You said to point out to you if you're wrong. You're wrong. You've got it wrong on about two or three different fronts.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, then, what is the governance . . .

Mr. Young: Will you let me finish?

The Chair: Through the chair.

Mr. Schmidt: What is the governance mechanism, then?

Mr. Young: First of all, the salaries of the AIOC executives are reviewed and regulated by the provincial bargaining and compensation office in Treasury Board and Finance. They're not regulated by the Department of Indigenous Relations. That's point one.

Point two, the board does not report to me. I'm an observer on the board for the government. The minister recommends to cabinet who should sit on the board, and cabinet ultimately approves the board of directors on the recommendation of the minister. I'm there as an observer to provide a link between government policy and the work of the AIOC. I'm a nonvoting board member. They certainly don't report to me. They have an independent board of directors made up of people well experienced in business, an expert board of directors who have an arm's length from government, and they manage the affairs of the AIOC, the board of directors. Government's input, if you will, is through the appointment of those board members, which we do along the way.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you to the department for the candid answer. He's obviously been on the board, seeing the skyrocketing executive compensation, and says there's nothing he can do about it. That's a real shame.

Now, according to the AIOC's annual report annual operating expenses for salaries and benefits for the total organization is about $3 million a year. Of that, more than $1.5 million is spent on executive salaries for five people. That's half of the operating budget of the AIOC. Given that . . .

Mr. Young: That's not true.

Mr. Schmidt: Yes. I can assure the department, the deputy minister that that is true.

Now, given that other loan guarantee programs like the feeder association loan program are operated by government directly, can the department tell us whether the people of Alberta are getting value for money by paying for so many executives for doing something that the government could do directly for less money?

Mr. Young: Well, I guess I would challenge the premise that the government should operate this organization or this work on its own, that the government should just take this on. As I said, we've appointed an expert board of directors who have investment business experience. If you look at the resumés of the board members, you'll see that they're very well qualified in business and investments. That kind of expertise certainly does not exist in the Department of Indigenous Relations.

Like many, many corporations, a board of directors is appointed arm's length from the government, and then that board is given the mandate to run the organization based on its expertise and so on. That's what the government chose to do six years ago, to appoint a quasi-independent, arm's-length organization with the inherent expertise and track record to oversee the kinds of investments that the AIOC makes. It's a proven model that works.

Mr. Schmidt: Oh, yeah. Sure. For 1 and a half million dollars for five people to oversee this when teachers had a legislated salary increase of 3 per cent, it's offensive, I think, to the people of Alberta to think that some government employees are making so much money.

ABIF performance measures rely on self-reporting. I'm wondering: what independent verification of the results has the department done on ABIF grants?

Mr. Young: I'll ask Don Kwas to answer that question. He oversees the program.

Mr. Kwas: The staff in my division look after the economic development programs that Indigenous Relations funds, including Aboriginal business investment fund. Staff on our team have really pretty solid contact with each of the applicants and the recipients.

The Chair: Thank you. We will now move to the government members for a 15-minute block with MLA Lunty.

Mr. Lunty: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, and welcome to our ministry officials for joining us this morning. We certainly appreciate the hard work that you do, and for coming to join us, and answering our questions, and providing a little more information about this extremely important area and extremely important ministry to our government. Since you only had 30 seconds or so, maybe I'd like to actually drill down a little bit on the Aboriginal business investment fund and give the officials a chance to talk a little bit more about the economic impact of that fund.

So, of course, through the chair, I'd like to ask a couple of questions, but I'll start on pages 25-26 of the annual report, where the minister reported that in the '24-25 fiscal year, the Aboriginal business investment fund invested $10 million to support 20 Indigenous community-owned economic development projects across multiple sectors, which created about 145 Indigenous jobs. So, Deputy, can you please explain how the Aboriginal business investment fund has contributed to strengthening Indigenous participation in Alberta's economy over the past fiscal year?

Mr. Young: Yes, and thanks for the question. ABIF, or the Aboriginal business investment fund, continues to be a vital part of advancing Indigenous economic participation across Alberta. Over the past year ABIF supported a diverse range of community-owned businesses across Alberta, from tourism and food services to construction and agriculture. Each project contributes to local job creation, skills development, and long-term economic sustainability.

The projects supported last year spanned the entire province. Some examples include Kainai Forage purchasing equipment for their agricultural businesses in southern Alberta and Little Red River Cree Nation expanding their Fifth Meridian Market.

ABIF has had a significant impact across the province. Twenty Indigenous community-owned businesses received capital funding in '24-25 to improve social and economic outcomes in their communities.

Some examples of the projects that ABIF supported in ’24-25 included Fort McMurray No. 468 First Nation, which received $600,000 in funding to open an A&W restaurant on highway 881. The project promotes economic diversification efforts into the food service industry and created 22 permanent, full-time jobs for community members. O’Chiese Market Place received $250,000 in funding to expand their business to include a new cafe and laundromat and improving fuel facilities. After the expansion the business will employ 49 community members, support community programs, and attract more visitors to the community.

In ’24-25 ABIF created 145 jobs in sectors that include agriculture, tourism and culture, health care, and retail trade. Supporting Indigenous community-owned businesses is part of the Alberta government’s commitment to ensure the full participation of Indigenous people in all aspects of Alberta’s economy and society. Thank you.

Mr. Lunty: Through the chair, thank you, Deputy, for that information. It’s certainly exciting to hear about projects all across the province, as you mentioned, and across various sectors. We tend to agree with your assessment that we can strengthen Aboriginal business and Aboriginal business ownership. It’s certainly a benefit to the province. I would like to ask a follow-up question on the ABIF program, related to assessment of the program. Through the chair: how does the department assess whether the investments that you highlighted are achieving their intended economic and employment outcomes?

Mr. Young: Yes. Thanks for the question. We assess the effectiveness of ABIF investments through a combination of performance metrics, community feedback, and ongoing project monitoring. Each funded project is required to submit a detailed business plan outlining expected economic and employment outcomes. These include projected job creation, revenue generation, and community benefits. Once approved, we track progress of these projects against these benchmarks through regular reporting and, if operationally feasible, site visits. The department also follows up with successful recipients two years after their grants have been closed to determine the two-year survivability of these projects.

Thank you.

9:50

Mr. Lunty: Thanks for that information, Deputy; appreciate that.

I would like to cede and turn the next question over to my colleague MLA Sawyer.

Mrs. Sawyer: Thank you, Mr. Chair, through you. I do want to commend the department. I spoke with someone a couple of weeks ago who credited the Aboriginal business investment fund and how it helped them create something. So it is working.

On page 21 of the 2024-25 annual report the ministry notes that it engages Indigenous peoples as economic partners and makes sure major projects proceed while meeting Alberta’s legal duty to consult. It highlights the need to balance Indigenous participation with economic growth. A two-part question for you. “How does the Alberta government ensure this balance is maintained in practice?” is the first piece. The second piece would be: how can the ministry provide examples of significant projects where this balance has been successfully achieved?

Mr. Young: Thanks very much for the question. Alberta’s government understands how important meaningful and thorough consultation with Indigenous communities is when evaluating and facilitating major economic projects that could have adverse effects on treaty rights and traditional uses. The Alberta government’s consultation policies strike the right balance. We respect treaty rights, harvesting, and traditional uses as well as the economic interests of all communities that stand to benefit from new developments. We are committed to ensure Indigenous communities share in these benefits, and we will continue to ensure we meet our legal and constitutional duty to consult. During consultation we focus on understanding and considering the potential adverse impacts of proposed projects on treaty rights, traditional uses, or harvesting activities, with a view to substantially addressing them. Industry proponents follow the Alberta government’s consultation policies and guidelines to fulfill the delegated procedural aspects of consultation.

Thank you.

Mrs. Sawyer: Thank you.

I’ll cede my time to MLA de Jonge.

The Chair: Go ahead, MLA de Jonge.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you so much, Chair, and thank you to my colleagues as well as to the ministry officials for joining us this morning. We’ve had some great discussion so far and great questions asked. I want to focus on how the department is ensuring that Indigenous communities are meaningfully engaged. I see on page 22 of the annual report that the ministry plays a co-ordinating role in ensuring that Indigenous communities are meaningfully engaged on nation-building and infrastructure projects, particularly through the federal investing in Canada infrastructure program. My question to the officials is: what is your role, and how is Indigenous Relations ensuring that Indigenous communities are adequately supported and meaningfully engaged to participate in these critical and these major projects?

Mr. Young: Thanks for the question. Indigenous Relations is mandated to collaborate with other ministry partners and the federal government to support and deliver programs, initiatives, and services that support community, social, and economic development for Indigenous communities in Alberta. This also supports reconciliation and includes initiatives such as ICIP, or investing in Canada infrastructure program. Indigenous Relations’ role in the ICIP program is to manage the relationships with and provide support to Indigenous communities and help them navigate the federal ICIP process. The department works closely with Indigenous communities; Alberta Infrastructure; and Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada to ensure program delivery is timely and aligned with community priorities.

Thank you.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you very much.

I would now like to cede my time to my colleague, MLA Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you very much. I’d like to look at performance measure 2(a), which is initiatives addressing violence against women and girls. This measure tracks the number of initiatives funded rather than the direct impacts. I’d just like to know: how do you collect the data to evaluate this performance measure?

Mr. Young: Thanks for the question. I’m going to ask Kristina Midbo, the executive director of the program, to address that question.

Ms Midbo: Thank you, Donavon. Thank you for the question. The community support fund is a $4 million annual grant fund that supports Indigenous-led projects and initiatives that reduce violence and increase the safety and economic security of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA-plus people. Currently, the impact of the community support fund is measured by the number of initiatives funded in a year, and data sources and performance measures continue to evolve.

The target of 20 funded targets assumes that all funded initiatives under the community support fund receive the maximum amount available per year, which is $200,000. The ministry collects this data directly from our partners and using an internal tracking record. We use that performance measure because it's a clear and transparent way to demonstrate program activity and accountability for the funds, and it shows how many communities and organizations are being supported through this program.

I would add that we recognize that this measure reflects activity or outputs rather than impact. To address this, we are working with our Indigenous partners to support capacity building and data collection and outcomes reporting. We are looking to work with our partners to help develop performance measures that are culturally appropriate and safe and trauma informed. Those future measures will help assess the substantive impact that these initiatives are having in community.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. That's good. That was my thought. You know, why track grants? Why not track impact? So if you're working on that and that's coming forward, that's great.

You've kind of explained a little bit about why the target was less than the actual. You know, I see the $200,000: you tried to maximize it. But were there any that were funded less than? Like, if there's no need to fund it to $200,000, why do you push for that? Why not just fund the program as required and do as many as you can and then measure the impacts, like you talked about?

Ms Midbo: Many applications, the applicants did not request the full $200,000. Because they did not request the full amount, we were able to have other funds available to support those additional four programs.

Mr. Rowswell: Will you adjust your targets going forward then? You know, you're working on a budget. You must have averages from past years as to what the application amount was. Then if people know that you could fund more, you might get – like, has it created a lack of applications? It was only 20. Would it create an issue where people may not apply because they think only a certain number of applicants are going to get approved?

Ms Midbo: The target of 20 funded initiatives will remain unless there is either an increase to the current CSF annual budget of $4 million, a decrease in the maximum amount available to fund a project or initiative, or we are able to partner with other funders to co-ordinate investment and expand the number of initiatives that we can support.

Mr. Rowswell: You mentioned other funders. What kind of other funders are there?

Ms Midbo: We would look to our partners in other ministries to fund with us. You know, the federal government: we would engage to see if they would be available to partner with us to support a particular initiative. Communities are also providing in-kind services or putting in their own funding to help advance their interests and priorities in preventing and reducing violence against Indigenous . . .

10:00

The Chair: Thank you.

I will go back to the Official Opposition members for a 10-minute block. Member Eremenko.

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, everybody, for being here this morning. So I can better understand your activities and approaches to outcome 2, may I reference a specific example? Original research was published this year in the *Canadian Journal of Emergency Medicine* to quantify differences in emergency department visit characteristics for First Nations females versus non First Nations females in Alberta. Findings suggested a lack of access to culturally safe primary and specialty care, recommending that ED providers must understand the conditions that underlie First Nations women's visits that "does not blame patients for the number or type of ED visits they require." Given the 100 education sessions that have been provided, I believe under the Indigenous learning initiative, in '24-25, is this the type of occurrence in which your department would collaborate with the ministry on?

Mr. Young: Sorry. Just trying to understand the second part. Which occurrence?

Member Eremenko: Well, the finding that Alberta health and various aspects of the health ministry are not meeting the needs of First Nations women in the same way that they're meeting non First Nations needs. Given outcome 2 of collaborating across ministries to build capacity, to advise, to support in terms of regulation, policy, and the delivery of programs: is this an example? It's vague in the annual report about how that collaboration actually kind of manifests, so using this as an example, could you advise on whether or not this is something that that your ministry would be involved in?

Mr. Young: Yes. Thank you for that clarification. I'll offer the first part and then I'll turn it back to Kristina, who can maybe offer a more specific example. You mentioned the Indigenous learning initiative that we put on.

Member Eremenko: Right.

Mr. Young: Right. That is much broader. That deals with sort of treaty rights. That deals with First Nations, Métis, Inuit in the province. Indigenous education 101 is probably the best way to – we don't delve into, you know, really specific examples such as the one you raised. You'd mentioned the Indigenous learning initiative, so I just wanted to clarify what the Indigenous learning initiative does and does not do.

Member Eremenko: It is under outcome 2. Okay. So that's not the space where that capacity would be built but within a different department.

Mr. Young: Right. I'll ask Kristina to offer a better answer than I just did.

Ms Midbo: We work with partners across the GOA, and that includes my colleagues in the Indigenous health division in what is now Primary and Preventative Health. The ADM attended meetings with all three councils that my team supports, the Premier's Council on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit Plus People and the First Nations and Métis women's councils on economic security. They talked about a number of issues that Indigenous women, girls, and 2S-plus people experience in the health care system. They shared personal experiences. My understanding is that that work was important to the Indigenous health division in their work to address antiracism in the health care system.

Member Eremenko: Is that level of importance measured in any way by your ministry to determine whether or not the engagement is effective in changing practice?

Ms Midbo: Right. In 2024-2025 it's difficult yet to see the impact. It takes time to implement change and to see the impact that that change has in communities, so it's to still be determined. Perhaps next year we'll have a better answer.

Member Eremenko: I hope so. I hope to see it in another annual report.

Thank you. I'll cede the rest of my time, Mr. Chair, to my colleague.

The Chair: Thank you.

Member Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Alberta government's gender-based violence prevention page states that 63 per cent of Indigenous women have experienced physical and sexual violence in their lifetime compared to 45 per cent non-Indigenous women, and an alarming 43 per cent of Indigenous women have been sexually assaulted since age 15 compared to 30 per cent of non-Indigenous women. We know the homicide rate for Indigenous women is five times higher than it is for non-Indigenous women. Now, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Roadmap was released in 2020, and we have a 10-year strategy to end gender-based violence. Can the department explain to the committee how the provincial funding strategy of short-term grants and announcements will reduce gender-based violence in Alberta and particularly gender-based violence towards Indigenous women and girls?

Mr. Young: I'll ask Kristina to respond.

Ms Midbo: Thank you for that question. We recognize the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in all kinds of areas – employment, education, housing, poverty – so it's a real . .

Ms Renaud: We know that. My question really is about the short-term nature of the grants. There are inherent problems with short-term grants as opposed to long-term grants where you can just do different work. That commitment is there. There's some safety and security. My question is: how is it that the department feels that the short-term grants will help reduce gender-based violence towards Indigenous women and girls?

Ms Midbo: We have some partnerships that we provide multiyear grants with. For example, the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women: we just concluded the final year of a five-year contribution agreement. We will begin discussing with the IAAW another multiyear grant agreement so that we can provide some sustainable funding to the organization. With that funding the IAAW has been able to expand the programs they offer, and they're doing really great work. The community support fund also provides multiyear grants. For example, in 2023-24 we provided a three-year grant to the Elizabeth Métis settlement. So we do recognize that sometimes a one-year program is not sufficient to really see those impacts we want to see in community.

Also, when we are working with grant applicants, we also talk to them about sustainability and talk to them about how this program or project may continue with or without government funding. So we're mindful of that, and we do our best.

Ms Renaud: To build on what one of the members said in an earlier block – it was about, you know, the department seems to rely on the number of grants and the type of grants and where they're going to demonstrate that they're being successful in some way, but given the horrific stats of violence and homicide, we're really looking for a place. Can you point to any place that we can look at and see that the trend is changing? It doesn't appear that way. We look at Alberta Council of Women's Shelters for anecdotal information or even statistics about how many people are turned away; that's not getting any better. I think the trend is getting worse, the number of people turned away. I don't think the incidents of violence are getting any better. Is there anywhere in the report – I couldn't find anything – to say that these investments we're making are actually working and the trend is changing? Is there anything that the department can point us to that we can look at today and then a year from now, hopefully, look back and say: what progress have you made?

Ms Midbo: I'm sorry. I'm trying to formulate my answer. Could you repeat that question?

Ms Renaud: So what I'm looking for is – we meet, hopefully, once a year for this ministry to talk about, you know: "These investments were made here and here and here's the progress. Here's what we anticipated the outcome to be, and here's where we are." There is no place here for us to measure about the violence towards Indigenous women and girls: is there a trend? Is it changing? We see the investments. We've heard the department explain where the money is being invested. There's a 10-year strategy to end violence. There's a roadmap from 2020. But where is the progress? What progress have we made? How many lives are being saved?

10:10

Ms Midbo: We work with Indigenous partners. Indigenous ways of knowing and being are critical to solutions to address and prevent violence against Indigenous communities and people. It's not just a government issue to be addressed; it's all of society. We provide opportunities to organizations, agencies, and government ministries to work with and collaborate with those women's councils and the Premier's council. Change takes time. We approach our work and Indigenous communities . . .

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move back to government members for 10 minutes.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the department for being here today. I'd like to talk a little bit about treaty land entitlements and the claims, particularly on page 22 of the annual report. The ministry has an ongoing role to resolve treaty land claim entitlements, including the recent progress on Lubicon Lake and Peerless Trout Nation. A number of questions around that. Why is the government of Alberta party to the federal land claim negotiations?

Mr. Young: Great. Just repeat that very last sentence.

Mr. Wiebe: Why is the government of Alberta a party to federal land claim negotiations?

Mr. Young: Thanks for the question, and it's a good one. Treaty land entitlement is actually one of my favourite things to be involved in in the ministry because, you know, it deals with some very broad and important issues around providing the appropriate land base to First Nations.

The government of Alberta has a constitutional obligation pursuant to paragraph 12 of the natural resources transfer agreement. When Alberta and Saskatchewan were created as provinces, the land base resources, natural resources, were not provided to Alberta and Saskatchewan. That changed in 1930 with the natural resources transfer agreement. So our obligation is to provide unoccupied Crown

land to the federal government as they fulfill their treaty obligations to First Nations. I think you would appreciate that the treaty obligation or the treaty relationship is between the federal government and the First Nation, but our job as the owner of the land is to provide unoccupied Crown land.

When treaty was entered into – and here in Alberta we have three historic treaties: Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8. Treaty 6 I think was signed in 1876 – I'm doing this by memory – Treaty 7 in 1877, and Treaty 8 in 1899. One of the first things the federal government did when it entered into treaty was to determine the quantum of land that is owing to First Nations, and generally speaking, 128 acres for every man, woman, and child is provided to First Nations pursuant to treaty. But when treaty was entered into over 150 years ago, many people, sometimes whole families, segments of a nation, were missed. They might have been out on the trapline; they might have been out hunting. The treaty commissioners did the best they could, but they didn't cover all of the communities, so many people were missed.

It really is a formula. It's 128 acres times the number of people who were originally surveyed, but if that original survey was inadequate or missed dozens of people, then the federal government has a responsibility, and beginning in the 1980s they started fulfilling those original treaty obligations through the treaty land entitlement program. Our job is to provide, as I say, unoccupied Crown land. We provide it to Canada. Canada then provides it to the First Nation. After a period of time it is added to reserves, and it becomes part of that First Nation's reserve. That's sort of a thumbnail sketch of how treaty land entitlement works. So we've got a very important role to play. It's a constitutional responsibility – we have no choice – and we gladly meet that obligation by providing land to Canada as they fulfill their original treaty obligations.

Thanks for the question.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you for the answer. I guess, another question is: what is Alberta's policy then to settling the treaty land claims?

Mr. Young: Sure. It's related to the answer on the first question. I mean, our policy is to fulfill treaty land entitlement as efficiently and as quickly as possible because it brings stability. It brings predictability. I'm sure you've read what's going on in B.C. Because they didn't have historic treaties, the question of title is an unsettled question in much of B.C. That is not the issue here in Alberta. It's not an unsettled question through the historic treaties.

Our policy is to work with Canada and nations. They are almost always tripartite negotiations: Canada, Alberta, and the First Nation. Sometimes the negotiations take quite a bit of time, and the reason for that is that the debt has been outstanding or owing to the First Nation, as you can appreciate, for well over 100 years. If a band or a First Nation was, quote, "shortchanged" in, say, 1876, and they were shortchanged by 20 people – I'm not going to pull out a calculator and do the calculation, but you can do it: 20 times 128 – it shows the shortfall, but now it's been owing to that First Nation for well over 100 years, since 1876 hypothetically. That's why the negotiations get really interesting and somewhat complex, because the debt has been owing to the Nation for more than a century.

Your question is: what is our policy? To settle those as quickly and as efficiently with recognizing that providing more land to First Nations provides a bigger land base on which economic development can occur. It helps, you know, business development, economic development.

We generally view it as a very positive thing, and it brings predictability and certainty to industry. They want to know: is there an outstanding land claim in the area in which they're working? For the most part, there isn't. I mean, there are not a lot of outstanding treaty land entitlement claims. Off the top of my head, I'm going to say there are five or six. They come from the federal government, that's where they originate. They don't originate with us. As we're invited to those conversations, on our own we verify what the outstanding amount is, if you will, the outstanding land. We do our own due diligence. Then we enter into tripartite negotiations with Canada and the First Nation to provide land, and then a lot of times some top-up funding is provided.

In the case of Peerless Trout, we built two schools. It's a really exciting area of work that the government does. When we do settle these historic land claims – I mean, I mentioned the Lubicon in my opening remarks.

The Lubicon were the only nation in Alberta that never had a land base to begin with. They were completely landless. All the other nations I'm talking about, there was a shortfall that was provided to them. They got the original amount; in many cases it wasn't enough, so we're addressing the shortfall. But in the case of the Lubicon there was no land provided whatsoever. So in 2018, the government achieved a land claim settlement with the Lubicon together with Canada. That was the very last band, the only and last band in Alberta that did not have a land base. Now they do, 95 square miles. Canada provided a few hundred million dollars to build their community, and that work is going on. It's exciting, it's important. You know, it changes the fabric of those communities.

Mr. Wiebe: Do the boundaries of some of these bands change sometimes? Is it always, or is it sometimes cash in lieu of boundary? How does that work?

Mr. Young: Well, that's an excellent . . .

10:20

Mr. Schmidt: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm raising a point of order under 23(b), "speaks to matters other than the question under discussion." Of course, as we know, Public Accounts is where we review the work of the department and look at the achievements it's made, the failures that it's experienced, and press the government to do better. This member's question is really leaning into policy and practice, not related at all actually to performance or outcomes of the department, so I think this question is out of order, and I request that the member move on to something that's actually within the scope of the committee.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I think, you know, he referred to the page number. It is about treaty land claims and the expansion of that, so I think he should be allowed to ask his question.

The Chair: Thank you. I think one of the questions asked by the member was the government policy on this. That was straight about government policy, and I had a hard time connecting it with the Public Accounts mandate although I thoroughly enjoyed the deputy minister's answer in reference to Lubicon First Nation, which I was part of and we were negotiating that while we were in government. But that question does kind of speak more to the policy. Here we are looking not at the policy or merits of the policy but what was done, how it was done, whether what the department said they will do: did they do that, and how will we measure that?

I will just caution you to kind of keep the questions related to the committee's mandate and not the government policy.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Chair.

Okay. Apart from the compensation paid to Canada for the benefit of First Nations, what are some of the third-party implementation costs associated with these settlements, then?

Mr. Young: Thanks for the question. It really varies from treaty land entitlement to treaty land entitlement, but there are third-party interests that have to be satisfied. Sometimes they relate to trappers. If there are, you know, a dozen trappers affected by a treaty land entitlement claim, then we have to compensate. We have to buy out those trappers, if you will. A lot of times it relates to a pipeline, power lines, utilities. Whatever is sort of in that selected land, those third-party interests have to be dealt with. They vary from negotiation to negotiation, but they are dealt with.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will go back to the Official Opposition for the third rotation of 10 minutes.

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've got to cover a few different bases here, so thanks for taking the time. It'll be a quick 10 minutes, I reckon.

Four First Nations communities, deputy minister, and one Métis Nation are awaiting addiction recovery communities in the province. Some have been waiting five years or more. How is your ministry fulfilling objective 2.2 in making sure that this work happens in a culturally appropriate way, informed by Indigenous people to advance reconciliation?

Mr. Young: Thanks for the question. I mean, the real mandate rests with Mental Health and Addiction. They're the department that really will oversee the construction of those recovery centres. But our involvement really relates to, say, interdepartmental liaison and co-ordination. We will, you know, meet with those nations from time to time, but the real mandate rests with Mental Health and Addiction.

Member Eremenko: So the mandate letter for 2023 for Indigenous Relations specifically does in fact mandate your ministry to work with Mental Health and Addiction. They are the lead, but it is specifically in your mandate to help to advance that work. We're five years and waiting. None of them have been built. What were your activities '24 to '25 that helped to achieve some progress on those projects?

Mr. Young: Well, and I'll ask Don Kwas to chip in a minute, but let me say that our work is really around ensuring that the priorities of the nation, the interests of the nation are brought to bear.

Member Eremenko: And how did that work take place in the last fiscal?

Mr. Young: We have protocol agreements with Treaty 6, with Treaty 7. We have protocol agreements with the Métis settlements. Through those protocol agreements and those tables that are established, conversations happen. We call them chief to chief; they're really chief to minister. It happens through those tables led by ministers and led by chiefs, and it happens in direct bilateral meetings between the minister and between chiefs.

Member Eremenko: I'd like to hear then from Mr. Kwas if perhaps there's a bit more specific detail on what those conversations have contained. Is your ministry encouraging stronger progress on achieving these goals?

Mr. Kwas: Absolutely, we are. We work directly with officials from the Mental Health and Addiction ministry in supporting their engagement efforts with Indigenous communities, whether it's with First Nations, Métis settlements, independent Métis communities, or those that are represented by the Métis Nation of Alberta. We work with, as the deputy mentioned, the ministries in fulfilling the obligations that the government of Alberta has made within the protocol agreements that we have signed with the two Treaty 7 tribal councils, with Treaty 6, and we hope, going forward, with Treaty 8.

Member Eremenko: OK, well, I mean, you know, they've been waiting a long time. I hope that what we can certainly be doing is ensuring – we're talking about hundreds of people that are going to be going through those recovery communities and, of course, given the disproportionate impact of Indigenous people living with substance use and addiction concerns, I hope we can all feel a greater sense of urgency in terms of actually seeing that work progress.

Total pivot here. I'd like to address the water tie-ins question in annual report '24-25. I believe it's on page 24. In Budget 2019, Alberta's government committed $100 million to bring regional drinking water infrastructure to First Nations reserve boundaries where feasible. In the following year, according to the report again, there was an announcement of an additional $13 million for Ermineskin Cree Nation to do exactly that. Now, in the report it says that "As of March 31, 2024," so, in fact, a period outside of the time of this particular annual report, "five projects had been completed," but it's not really an activity, Mr. Chair, to be reported in this particular annual report. Pertinent to '24-25, the annual report references meetings for Ermineskin exclusively, but I'm hoping the deputy minister or one of his colleagues can provide a more fulsome update.

What role did the ministry play in advancing the conversations with North Red Deer Water Services Commission to help achieve progress on this particular project, and were those activities funded by the $13 million earmarked for Ermineskin?

Mr. Young: Thanks for the question. I'll ask Don Kwas to provide an answer.

Mr. Kwas: There absolutely were ongoing discussions with Ermineskin Cree Nation and North Red Deer. We worked with the lead ministry for this program, Transportation and Economic Corridors. That's where the water tie-in program lives, and the funding is provided through them and they have a contribution agreement that's been signed with the water commission to complete the work to bring the pipe up to the reserve boundary for Ermineskin.

Then we know that there was a cost estimate to extend that regional drinking waterline from Ponoka to the boundary of Ermineskin, and it was $53.2 million plus an additional $3.6 million for Ermineskin's buy-in to the water commission, for an overall total for that project of $56.8 million.

Member Eremenko: What proportion of that $56 million plus – I'm sorry, I missed the final number – what percentage of that is actually allocated or paid for through the $100 million 2019 allocation?

Mr. Kwas: It is, I think, now altogether above and beyond $100 million and the commitment, I believe, is $151 million altogether.

10:30

Member Eremenko: How much of that $100 million from the 2019 commitment remains?

Mr. Kwas: I think the spend to date of the original $100 million is $93.2 million, so there's six and change left from the original commitment.

Member Eremenko: Do you have a sense of how many First Nations reserves still require that type of infrastructure investment so that we're bringing the water infrastructure right up to the boundary?

Mr. Kwas: That would be a question that would probably be best answered by our federal colleagues Indigenous Services Canada, which has the responsibility for dealing with water infrastructure on-reserve.

Member Eremenko: What about up to reserve, though, Mr. Kwas?

Mr. Kwas: We work with the federal government and with the First Nations as projects are identified to be able to bring the water lines up to the reserve boundary. We have not been getting a whole lot of traction with our federal colleagues in the last couple of years with respect to using the water tie-in program as the means that they prefer to provide water. What we have seen from our federal colleagues is that they have been investing money in water treatment plants on-reserve, as opposed to using this program necessarily.

Member Eremenko: I'm basically hearing – correct me if I'm wrong – that the $100 million allocation is pretty well used up. We're at about 93 per cent allocated, and there is currently no other additional dollars earmarked, either within your ministry or within Transportation and Economic Corridors, to see that there would be additional investment in that area.

Mr. Kwas: The Ermineskin project right now is the last one that we're working on from this commitment, and we would be happy to continue to work with our federal colleagues or . . .

Member Eremenko: Thank you. I've got one more question, and it is kind of pertinent, I think salient, to some of the points that have been raised here around outputs versus outcomes. I'm glad to hear that progress has been made in terms of adopting the recommendations from the Auditor General, and I'm not really sure why we're still, you know, 13 months in and waiting for an assessment, but I do look forward to hearing about how that progresses.

The output versus outcome: this annual report still has far more output than outcome in terms of the actual measurement of impact. What was the implementation within your ministry to rise to the occasion and meet the recommendation of the Auditor General, when I still see in this annual report output more than outcome? What's the work that you've done to adopt the recommendation?

Mr. Kwas: Well, we have worked very closely with the Auditor General's office to develop . . .

The Chair: Thank you.

We will move back to the government members. MLA Lovely.

Ms Lovely: Thank you so much, Chair. You know, before I get to my question, I just wanted to comment to the team that I had the opportunity to bring a number of constituents in to see Minister Wilson when he held the portfolio, and each meeting he would share with us the successes that the ministry had in terms of helping people in community, specifically getting businesses going. He would have a little thank-you gift from each one of these and had a story that was so meaningfully tied to the success . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Point of order.

The Chair: MLA, a point of order is made.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you again. Under 23(b), "speaks to matters other than the question under discussion." You know, if the Member for Camrose wants to tell us about the lovely meetings she's had with the Minister of Indigenous Relations, she's more than welcome to do that at any other point of our time here in the Legislature, but Public Accounts is not the place to even discuss the activities of the minister. It's the department's activities in the '24-25 fiscal year that are the focus, so I ask that the Member for Camrose be cautioned against telling us these kinds of stories and focus on questioning the department.

Mr. Rowswell: I think she's probably building context towards her actual question, so I would ask that she be allowed to do that.

The Chair: Okay. I guess I won't find a point of order.

But, Member, just get to the question. Continue.

Ms Lovely: Perfect. Well, actually, I was getting to my question. But I do want to just stress that there were a number of successes that the minister had shared with me.

Now to my question. On page 53 of the annual report there is a shortfall in revenues from premiums, fees, and licenses. Can the deputy minister provide more detail on why revenues fell short and what steps are being taken to stabilize these revenue sources?

Mr. Young: Thanks for the question. I'm going to ask Shakeeb Siddiqui, the ADM of finance, to answer that question.

Thank you.

Mr. Siddiqui: Good morning. Thank you for the question. With respect to the shortfall on premiums, fees, and licenses this is predominantly attributed to the Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, AIOC. AIOC charges a set-up fee when we issue a loan guarantee. This covers the cost of advisory services and a defined-term loan guarantee.

In '24-25 the fee revenue decreased, as referenced earlier. There were fewer deals closed than expected during this time. Most significantly, project Aspen did not come through in '24-25, meaning that the fees associated with that $1 billion loan guarantee were not realized by AIOC. This would have been the largest loan guarantee in AIOC history. As mentioned, project Aspen did not close due to a structural issue identified by TC Energy prior to closing.

There was another transaction that was delayed due to uncertainty related to restructuring of the Alberta power market, and other deals considered in '24-25 did not close due to unacceptable risk-reward profiles.

In summary, that shortfall is owing to AIOC and the number of deals concluded in '24-25.

Ms Lovely: Thank you so much. I appreciate the answer.

With that, I'll cede my time to my next colleague.

Mrs. Sawyer: I want to give you an opportunity – I'm going to circle back for a minute. In the '24-25 annual report the ministry noted that it had completed implementation of the May 2022 Auditor General recommendation on performance reporting, shifting from an output-based model to an outcome-focused approach. Can you share with us what key lessons the ministry learned from implementing this new performance-reporting framework?

Mr. Young: Thank you. I'll ask Don Kwas, who oversees the program and that audit, to respond.

Mr. Kwas: What we have established since 2023 is a robust reporting and continuous improvement framework, which included development

of new and enhanced performance measures, an annual program review along with quarterly and annual reporting processes. The framework has allowed our ministry to develop logic models and performance measures, strengthen the sources and methods of our data collection, and then we work with communities on how data is collected and used by our ministry. Our enhanced performance measures provide more timely and meaningful data for decision-making.

Mrs. Sawyer: Thank you. Just a follow-up. Are the lessons being used to inform future program design accountability mechanisms, and how is that progress being communicated to Albertans?

Mr. Kwas: Sure. Our improvement in performance-reporting framework, as I mentioned earlier, includes an annual program review. We also do a performance measure review, which allows our programs to make timely and informed updates or enhancements to our programs along with the changes to performance measures and data collection to ensure that the data that we collect reflects the outcome that it's intended to support. How we communicate this is we share our results in our ministry's annual report.

10:40

Mrs. Sawyer: Thanks very much for that.

Chair, I'll cede my time to my colleague.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, MLA Sawyer. I note on page 21 of the annual report that the AIOC expanded its sector mandate to include tourism in '24-25 but hasn't yet approved any projects in that sector. So I'm wondering: what was the rationale for expanding that mandate, and particularly why was a sector-specific approach chosen rather than a sector-agnostic model?

Mr. Young: Thanks very much for the question. The AIOC's initial focus was on the natural resource sector – energy, mining, and forestry – due to its importance to Alberta's economy as well as its potential to provide significant benefits to Indigenous communities. The Alberta government's original approach to sector expansion was initially very cautious, aiming to reduce risk while adapting to the changing priorities of Indigenous communities and the province's broader economic goals. At the creation of the AIOC Indigenous communities were already expressing an interest in expanding the AIOC's mandate beyond the natural resource sectors.

Your second one, about the rationale. In 2022 increasing interest for sector expansion from Indigenous communities combined with the need for the province to maximize all available mechanisms to hasten Alberta's post COVID-19 recovery made it the right time to expand into telecommunication, agriculture, and transportation. In 2024 Alberta's government launched a long-term provincial tourism strategy focused on five pillars, including Indigenous tourism. Indigenous Relations sought to expand the AIOC's mandate into the tourism sector to ensure Indigenous groups are prepared to be partners in Alberta's new tourism strategy. These expansions demonstrate Indigenous Relations' adaptability to better align the AIOC's mandate with Alberta's economic priorities, ensuring Indigenous communities can participate and access emerging opportunities in Alberta's growing economy.

In relation to your last question around sort of being sector agnostic: rather than adopting a sector-agnostic approach, Alberta's government pursued a targeted expansion strategy focusing on sectors with strong growth potential and long-term stability. This approach aligns with both Indigenous and government priorities, helping to reduce risk and deliver sustainable, long-term benefits for Indigenous communities. The AIOC maintains a very low threshold for risk tolerance, and each opportunity is assessed through that lens before a loan guarantee can be issued.

To date the AIOC has faced challenges identifying suitable investment opportunities in its expanded sectors as larger companies are often reluctant to engage due to low capital needs and potential complexities, while smaller firms typically lack the financial stability or asset quality required to meet the AIOC's strict eligibility criteria. The AIOC remains committed to supporting viable opportunities when Indigenous communities and industry partners identify the right fit.

Thanks for the questions.

Ms de Jonge: Thanks, Deputy.

I'll now cede my time to my colleague MLA Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: I'll maybe start now and wrap it up when we come back, but I'd like to talk to the Aboriginal consultation office timelines and capacity. In the annual report, particularly on page 22 of the report, it's reported that the Aboriginal consultation office, ACO, reviewed approximately 8,400 . . . [Mr. Rowswell's speaking time expired] Okay. We'll come back to that.

The Chair: Thank you. Before I start this rotation, I'll note that we are already at 10:44, and I have almost 27 minutes of agenda to go through. A couple of options. Both sides can make this fourth rotation shorter, five minutes each, and the fifth rotation two minutes. That's how we can go through it, or with unanimous consent the committee can extend the duration of this meeting. First I will ask if it's agreeable to exceed five minutes from your time. We can take that out.

Mr. Lunty: Sorry. What are you asking, Chair?

The Chair: We have at least 27 minutes of agenda left, but the time on the clock is 10:45, only 15 minutes. Either we can extend the meeting or adjust the next block time to go through the agenda.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We'd like to keep our time as it is.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah, that's fine. But we can't extend.

The Chair: You can't extend.

Mr. Rowswell: No, we can't extend.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, member.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to note that while the deputy minister was reading his scripted response to Member de Jonge's question about the AIOC, he noted that the AIOC is actually struggling to meet its mandate, particularly with respect to loan guarantees in the tourism sector, yet they get 15 per cent pay increases year over year. It's a shocking failure by the department to hold the AIOC to account and, in fact, they're rewarding failure by allowing executive compensation to skyrocket. This is no way to manage a government department or government Crown agency.

My questions are about performance measures, particularly performance measure 1(a). You know, the Auditor General took the department to task for not providing meaningful performance measures, particularly around the EPP. Now, the department said that it had implemented the recommendations and they were ready for follow up, yet we didn't see any changes in the annual report. Can the department explain why there were no changes to measuring the outcomes of the program and when can we expect to see those in the annual reports?

Mr. Young: I'll ask Don Kwas to respond.

Mr. Kwas: We did provide to the Auditor General's office a report, a plan, for dealing with the recommendations that came to us from their 2022 program audit. We provided that in November 2024, and that plan outlined the changes that we would be making to our performance reporting in our economic programs, aboriginal business investment fund and employment partnerships program, and we have been working with the Auditor General's office to have them review our report. In the meantime we have been implementing what we provided to the Auditor General in that report. We have a bit of a lag between what we put forward in our business plan and then what we report back in our annual report.

We have developed new and different performance measures for our economic development programs, and we have developed logic models to use for those programs to make sure that we are appropriately working with grant recipients to capture the data that we need to be able to report on the progress that we achieve.

Mr. Schmidt: Is the department telling the committee that they're waiting for the data collection to happen before they start reporting on these new performance measures? Am I understanding correctly?

Mr. Kwas: We need to have the data reported from our grant recipients before we're able to report on it.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. But I've seen this in past government reports. It is well within possibility that the department could have rolled out the new performance measures and just said: there's no data available because we're waiting to collect this. That was an option that was available to the department. Why didn't it take it for this annual report?

Mr. Kwas: We are working, again, as I mentioned, to collect the data that we need to be able to report upon. We have our new performance measures outlined in next year's business plan. Once we have our data gathered, we will report on the data.

10:50

Mr. Schmidt: With respect to the EPP in particular, can the ministry share how it intends to assess or determine whether that program is achieving objectives? We've heard already that there are performance measures in place. What are those performance measures going to be?

Mr. Kwas: Well, we work with partner departments to utilize the funding that we get from the labour market transfer agreements for the employment partnerships program. In this past year we did see a reduction in funds from 4 and a half million that we had been allocated before to the $4 million that we were able to deal with in the budget. What we have been able to report upon is that we do have an estimated 1,300 Indigenous peoples . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Chair, my question wasn't what you've already reported on. I've read the annual report. I know what's been reported on. My question is: what additional performance measures has the department created in response to the Auditor General's recommendations? The department has said that they have them. Just tell us what they are now. Just tell us, like . . .

Mr. Kwas: They're in our next business plan. They're publicly available there.

The Chair: Through the chair.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Chair, the department has been happy to read scripted answers in response to UCP government backbencher questions. Just read for us then what the new performance measures are so that we . . .

Mr. Kwas: I don't have that business plan here right before me.

Mr. Schmidt: Oh, my God. The lack of preparation that this department . . .

Mr. Lunty: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Sawyer: Point of order.

Mr. Lunty: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Not surprising, the ringmaster called us the circus earlier, which is hilarious. I'd like to raise two points of order. First point of order is 23(b), where the member opposite in his own wording admitted that his question is about future performance measures. Clearly he chastised our members for being on this committee for two years. Well, he's been in this game a lot longer. He should know the point of PAC is not to ask about future performance measures. He admitted in his own question to a point of order on 23(b).

Also order, for not the first time today, 23(j). The member is using abusive and insulting language to our department officials, accusing them of not being prepared. I think we can all agree that the ministry officials have done quite a lot of preparation and came to this committee with the best of intentions.

Mr. Schmidt: Answering your questions.

Mr. Lunty: And he keeps interjecting, so proving my point on 23(j). I would like to submit those two points of order. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And of course, you know, Member Lunty is always in error but never in doubt. With respect to 23(b), the implementation of the Auditor General's recommendations is well within the realm of the work of Public Accounts. I'm simply asking the department how they've implemented the recommendations. This is perfectly within scope. The department refuses to answer the questions, but these questions are well within scope. So that is not a point of order.

Now, with respect to the point of order 23(j), I'm sorry that the member's feelings are hurt again. This is a recurring theme, but it's quite clear that the department has not come prepared to answer questions other than the ones that were submitted by the UCP backbenchers ahead of time. We've clearly seen the deputy minister reading from a script every time the backbenchers across the desk read a question, but every time we've asked a question we've seen, you know: "I don't know the answer. I'm going to have to get back to you on that. I don't have that information today." So this is an accurate observation of the department's level of preparedness to appear at PAC today and not a point of order.

The Chair: Thank you. I would note three things. I would say to both sides that when you're arguing a point of order, go to the standing order that you're referring to and just tell me how it's violated and leave the other commentary aside. Second thing, with respect to the question whether it's relevant, 23 – that was under 23(b), right?

I think earlier, this plan was discussed about the Auditor General, and even the Deputy Auditor General commented that they are looking at it. So, I think the question about that recommendation, I do not find that it's not relevant to the matter at hand. Questions

could always be asked a bit more clearly to make them relate specifically to the report at hand and the recommendation under question.

Again, I would urge all members to use language that is more conducive to order, but at this point, I don't find that the language used by the member rises to the level of 23(j).

With that, the member can continue.

Mrs. Sawyer: Mr. Chair, I also called a point of order. We called one at the same time. May I?

The Chair: Sure.

Mrs. Sawyer: I actually was going to call on 23(c), because the question was something that I had already asked and had been answered.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course, we've been down this road of raising points of order under 23(c) a number of times on this committee.

Mrs. Sawyer: Well, I'm new.

Mr. Schmidt: That's still no excuse.

The Chair: Member, let him finish. I think it's not appreciated when you crossed out, so I'll correspond: all communication should be through the chair.

Mr. Schmidt: You know, I understand that the member is new, but we continue to see they've got four, or five, or six staff members sitting behind them who should work to prepare the members to participate meaningfully in this committee.

Twenty-three(c), of course, "persists in needless repetition or raises matters that have been decided during the current session," we continue to maintain, and the chair has consistently found, that it is up to the member to ask questions until they've either decided to move on or received a satisfactory answer. I'm sorry again that the member's feelings were hurt that I asked another question, but this isn't a point of order.

The Chair: Thank you, Member. I don't find this to be a point of order. I didn't see any repetition. I don't think the member was raising matters that are already decided in this session, so it's not a point of order.

Go ahead, Member Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Deputy Minister, earlier in this meeting, my colleague talked about Jordan's principle, and you referenced a number of letters that your department was working with other ministries to encourage some work. I want to specifically talk about persons with developmental disabilities and family supports for children with disabilities. As you may know, families are unable to procure a contract, if they live on-reserve, for these important supports for their children or for their dependent adults. I'm wondering if you could tell me if that ministry was part of the group of letters that you described.

Mr. Young: I don't believe it was.

Ms Renaud: It was not part of the group of letters where you were encouraging work on Jordan's principle?

Mr. Young: We were dealing specifically with the absence or the pulling back of federal funding in the education sector as it relates to . . .

Ms Renaud: How has your ministry been involved at all in any discussion or work or joint work with another ministry to ensure that families and children and people with disabilities that choose to live on-reserve and stay on-reserve can procure a contract with government? Have you been involved in any way to sort of move that along?

Mr. Young: I don't recall that we have been in this year, '24-25.

Ms Renaud: Have you been approached by that ministry at all for any assistance whatsoever?

Mr. Young: Not that I recall.

Ms Renaud: So no work whatsoever to increase the number of contracts procured by families with people with disabilities on-reserve, nothing?

Mr. Young: Well, that would likely be a question for Children and Family Services . . .

Ms Renaud: No, that's a question for this ministry. So my question is – you talked earlier about the work that you were doing around Jordan's principle. You referenced a number of ministries that you were pushing forward and doing some work. I believe that the deputy minister said he would table those letters for the committee if I'm not mistaken.

Mr. Young: Chair, if I could answer the question.

The Chair: Sure, go ahead.

Mr. Young: The member doesn't have a good understanding of the role of Indigenous Relations.

Ms Renaud: Excuse me, Mr. Chair. Just back to my question. My question was about the work . . .

The Chair: I think, deputy, that kind of language is not helpful. You asked a question. You can raise objections to the question, that it's not in order. We can talk about it, but, again, I would urge department officials, all members, to use language that is respectful.

Also, at this time it's already 11 o'clock, and I will call for a motion that this meeting be adjourned. So moved by MLA Rowswell.

[The committee adjourned at 11 a.m.]

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