



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Resource Stewardship

Ministry of Indigenous Relations
Consideration of Main Estimates

Thursday, May 12, 2016
9 a.m.

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Second Session**

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND), Chair
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W), Deputy Chair

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)*
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)
Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)**
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)***
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)

* substitution for Thomas Dang

** substitution for Wayne Drysdale

*** substitution for Chris Nielsen

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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Participant

Ministry of Indigenous Relations
Hon. Richard Feehan, Minister

9 a.m. Thursday, May 12, 2016

[Loyola in the chair]

**Ministry of Indigenous Relations
Consideration of Main Estimates**

The Chair: Welcome, everybody. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

I'd ask that we go around the table and have all MLAs introduce themselves for the record. Minister, when we get to you, please introduce the staff that are joining you at the table. First, I'd like to note for the record that under Standing Order 56(2.1) to (2.4) Dr. Bob Turner will be officially substituting for Mr. Chris Nielsen, Mr. Dave Rodney is officially substituting for Mr. Wayne Drysdale, and Mr. Jon Carson for Mr. Thomas Dang. I'm Rod Loyola, MLA for Edmonton-Ellerslie and chair of this committee. We'll start to my right.

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

Mr. MacIntyre: Don MacIntyre, MLA for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

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

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

Mr. Rodney: Dave Rodney, Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Feehan: I'm Richard Feehan. I'm the Minister of Indigenous Relations. Let me introduce some of the people at the table. To my far left is Cynthia Dunnigan, the acting assistant deputy minister, First Nations and Métis relations. Beside me is Donavon Young, who is the Deputy Minister of Indigenous Relations. To my right is Lorne Harvey, who is the assistant deputy minister of corporate services.

Ms Babcock: Erin Babcock, MLA for Stony Plain.

Mr. Carson: Jon Carson, MLA, Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Dr. Turner: Bob Turner, MLA, Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Kazim: Anam Kazim, MLA, Calgary-Glenmore.

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

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

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

Mr. Malkinson: Brian Malkinson, MLA, Calgary-Currie.

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

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates. Before we proceed with consideration of the main estimates for the Ministry of Indigenous Relations, I would like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.01(6), the rotation is as follows. The minister or the member of Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may make

opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes. For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of the third party, if any, and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent members and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes private members of the government caucus and the minister may speak. For the time remaining, we will follow the same rotation just outlined to the extent possible; however, the speaking times are reduced to five minutes as set out in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

Members may speak more than once; however, speaking times for the first rotation are limited to 10 minutes at any one time. A minister and a member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. For the final rotation, with speaking times of five minutes, once again a minister and a member may combine their speaking time for a maximum total of 10 minutes. Discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not speaking time is combined. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their speech if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time.

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

Three hours have been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations. With the concurrence of the committee I will call a five-minute break near the midpoint of the meeting; however, the three-hour clock will continue to run. Does anyone oppose having the break? Hearing none, we'll have a break at the midpoint.

Committee members, ministers, and other members who are not committee members may participate; however, only a committee member or an official substitute for a committee member may introduce an amendment during a committee's review of the estimates.

Ministry officials may be present, and at the direction of the minister officials from the ministry may address the committee. Ministry staff seated in the gallery, if called upon, have access to the microphone in the gallery area. I would just add that if you get up to speak, could you please state your name and your position when doing so. Members' staff may be present and, space permitting, may sit at the table or behind their members along the committee room wall. Members have priority for seating at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to three hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and we will adjourn. Otherwise, we will adjourn at noon.

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

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

Again I will remind all meeting participants to address their questions and responses through the chair and not directly to each other.

The vote on the estimates is deferred until consideration of all ministry estimates has concluded and will occur in Committee of Supply on May 17, 2016.

If there are amendments, an amendment to the estimates cannot seek to increase the amount of the estimates being considered, change the destination of a grant, or change the destination or purpose of a subsidy. An amendment may be proposed to reduce an estimate, but the amendment cannot propose to reduce the estimate

by its full amount. The vote on amendments is deferred until Committee of Supply convenes on May 17, 2016. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are to be moved. Twenty copies of amendments must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

I will now invite the Minister of Indigenous Relations to begin with his opening remarks. Please go ahead, Minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Good morning, everyone. Nice to see you all here. It's really a pleasure to be here on behalf of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations for the spending estimates of 2016-2017.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce – I know I have a bit already – some of the people at the table. There are other people who may be called upon to speak to some of the questions that you have, so I'd like to just run through a few of the folks here. Again I remind you that Donavon Young is here as the deputy minister. To my left is the acting assistant deputy minister for First Nations and Métis relations, Cynthia Dunnigan. To my right is Lorne Harvey, the assistant deputy minister of corporate services. Also in the room we have, to start, Stan Rutwind, who is the assistant deputy minister of consultation and land claims; Tracy Balash, who is the assistant deputy minister of indigenous women's initiatives and research; Howard Wong, who is the assistant director and senior financial officer, corporate services; and Jessica Johnson, who is the director of communications. I may be calling on them to help us with the discussions this morning.

Indigenous Relations acts as a focal point for the province's renewed relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities and organizations in Alberta. The relationships with both rural and urban indigenous communities and organizations are fundamental to maintaining strong families, strong communities, and healthy environments. Our government recognizes that indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination, full participation in society, and meaningful participation in decisions that affect them.

Our ministry provides leadership and advice to other ministries on indigenous issues and policies and engages with indigenous communities and peoples, the federal government, industry, and other partners to strengthen social and economic opportunities for indigenous people. Indigenous Relations also manages the First Nations and Métis settlement consultation processes for the Alberta government.

To reflect all of this, we have multiyear initiatives in play with fundamental appreciation for partnerships that will take us on a path to ensure better outcomes for indigenous people over the next three years. Each of these initiatives is viewed through the lens of the principles and objectives of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Some examples include the full implementation of the principles and objectives of that declaration.

We've received input from ministries, indigenous leadership, and organizations. Now we are starting more in-depth conversations with our partners on the details, creating government-to-government relationship agreements with treaty areas to focus on common priorities and issue resolution with First Nations; renewing our consultation policy with First Nations, including the repeal of Bill 22, the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Act; implementing the Métis settlements consultation policy, which was announced in April; working toward the development of a nonsettlement Métis consultation policy; and supporting outcomes from the national round-table on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, including contributing to a national public awareness campaign. We are also continuing to work with the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women and other

ministry partners and organizations to develop community-based solutions to improve socioeconomic outcomes for indigenous women and girls.

In addition to these multiyear strategic initiatives, Indigenous Relations co-ordinates several grants that are provided to organizations such as treaties 6, 7, and 8, the Metis Settlements General Council, the Métis Nation of Alberta Association, the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, and the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association. These organizations act as vital links to indigenous communities throughout the province. The grants will support their participation in and co-creation of important government initiatives such as the implementation of the principles and objectives of the United Nations declaration and the climate leadership plan. Capacity funding is also provided to First Nations and Métis settlements so they can participate in consultation in a meaningful way.

9:10

The indigenous population is the fastest growing demographic in Alberta, so it's very important to support employment and economic initiatives, which are illustrated by our ministry's business partnership programs. These initiatives will help efforts to bridge the socioeconomic gap. Our ministry has also established an intern program that allows young, bright indigenous individuals to work in government ministries and spend nine months working with an indigenous community organization. This excellent program helps build bridges within the indigenous community, both within and outside of government.

Now let's talk about numbers. The department's total budget for 2016-17 is \$192 million. It was \$202 million in 2015-16, so you will notice a \$10 million decrease, which I'd like to address up front because it in no way reflects a shift in our government's commitment to indigenous partners. This decrease is simply a result of a decrease of \$8 million because Budget 2015 included a one-time capital funding commitment for critical infrastructure on Métis settlements. This funding was disbursed and is now being put to good use. As well, a decrease of \$2 million reflects a prediction from the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission that there will be less revenue gathered from First Nations owned casinos, a future-looking prediction, and therefore a reduction in the First Nations development fund grants. There were also a few other reductions such as a decrease in a Canada-Alberta jobs fund agreement, a small cut in salaries and supplies, and a natural reduction in cash flow required for work on flood recovery from the 2013 floods.

Our government is committed to a new relationship with indigenous people and to engaging in a manner that promotes and supports that relationship. Budget 2016 reflects this commitment by including an increase of more than \$2 million to advance a number of initiatives that will take us on a path to better outcomes for indigenous people over the next three years.

Some highlights include \$1.025 million to deliver on the Premier's priority to engage with indigenous leadership and organizations on the principles and objectives of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and to support the development and implementation of government-to-government relationship agreements with treaty areas to focus on common priorities and resolve issues. There is \$750,000 to engage meaningfully with First Nations and Métis on enhanced consultation, including the renewal of the First Nations consultation policy and the development of a nonsettlement consultation policy, and \$225,000 for indigenous women's initiatives both at the community level and in response to federal, provincial, and territorial commitments on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Included in this, for the first time,

Indigenous Relations is providing \$100,000 to the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women to support their work in developing community-based solutions to improve socioeconomic outcomes for indigenous women and girls.

Of our budget of \$192 million, just over \$159 million, or 82 per cent, is grant funding, which includes \$124 million for the First Nations development fund, and this is casino revenue allocated to assist in First Nations development; \$10 million to the Métis settlements as part of the long-term arrangement funding, which includes, among other things, \$2.1 million to address infrastructure projects, \$1 million to address Métis settlement housing, \$1 million for Métis settlements' consultation capacity, and \$5.9 million for essential services, education training, and safe communities; \$7 million for economic development projects with indigenous communities; \$1.8 million for the employment partnership program from the Canada-Alberta job fund; \$6.3 million for First Nations consultation capacity, to ensure First Nations have the resources necessary to participate in the consultation process; \$1.9 million for funding to the Métis Nation of Alberta Association to support their capacity to participate in things like the United Nations declaration, the development of a nonsettlement consultation policy, and the work on the climate leadership plan; and \$6.5 million for flood recovery in the Siksika and Stoney Nakoda First Nations.

Our budget is focused on producing real changes which will help make a better future for indigenous people in Alberta. We are maximizing the funding that is allocated to us for the benefit of all Albertans. Indigenous Relations plays a leadership role in advancing the social and economic situation of indigenous communities by working closely with them every step of the way.

Indigenous people are an important part of the economy and social fibre of Alberta, and therefore it is crucial that they be involved in decisions, projects, and issues that affect them. That is why renewing our relationship with indigenous peoples and providing adequate funding to do so is of the utmost importance.

Thank you for allowing me to give you an overview of our budget initiatives today.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

For the following hour members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. Would you like me to set 20-minute intervals?

Mr. Hanson: Yes, please.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you very much. First of all, I'd like to thank the elders and people of Treaty 6, on whose lands we sit, for allowing us to be here today. I'd also like to thank the chair, Mr. Loyola, and I'd like to take a moment to thank Mr. Feehan and all of the Indigenous Relations staff for being here today. Also, in our thoughts and prayers are First Nations and all Albertans that are being affected by the wildfires in the northeast of our province and in Treaty 8 territory. This is a trying time, and I have seen personally how so many people have pulled together in my own communities, offering assistance and opening their homes to complete strangers. The compassion of the people in this province is remarkable.

I would also like to say at this time how touched I was to hear that Primco Dene, one of Canada's most successful First Nations businesses, owned by coalition bands near Cold Lake, pulled up in a truck overloaded with water bottles for people who were displaced.

Charlene Cardinal of Beaver Lake council said that the residents of her community were only too happy to open their rec centre and

campground to anyone being evacuated. It is amazing how in the face of tragedy people pull together. It's times like these that I'm proud to be an Albertan.

Another one I'd like to mention is the Kikino Métis settlement. They have a place called Silver Birch recreation area, and they opened up and welcomed people. People were donating campers and motorhomes for the displaced people. It's been a fantastic, very moving 10-day period.

The reason we're here today is to ensure that we're doing our very best for our First Nations, Métis settlements, and all Albertans. I'm proud of our Canadian heritage, and the province of Alberta is known for having one of the largest indigenous populations in Canada.

My focus today and for the remaining time we are in opposition is to learn more about the indigenous peoples of our province, to listen and learn from them and collaborate with all involved and one day, hopefully, bring back the Alberta advantage for all Albertans as well as First Nations as we move forward.

We've got a lot of ground to cover today, so I'll begin with my questions. I'd also like to give the opportunity to my colleagues to interject at different opportunities to question if that's okay. Of course, we'll go back and forth and have 20-minute intervals.

Number one, I was curious. Being that you have the privilege of representing a beautiful and rich culture that is not your own, I imagine you have some of your staff not only with expertise in this culture but people who culturally represent indigenous people. I was just wondering, Mr. Feehan, how many indigenous people you have on your senior staff to help you understand and fully appreciate the portfolio.

Mr. Feehan: Well, as you can imagine, we have a very close relationship with indigenous communities, and as a result we have many people from the indigenous community come to work in our ministry because of their knowledge and so on. The government of Alberta does not keep a direct record, however, of the number of people who represent any particular constituency, including the indigenous community. I can tell you that we have indigenous people both in the ministry office and also in the service offices.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much. I think it's important, so I just wanted to see what . . .

Mr. Feehan: I can add also that we have two executive directors who are indigenous in our office running programs as well.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Next question: with the government of Canada's statement that is now supporting the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, will there be any changes forthcoming for the Ministry of Indigenous Relations?

Mr. Feehan: I'm sorry. I'm having a lot of trouble hearing you, so I wonder if I can just have you repeat the question.

9:20

Mr. Hanson: With the government of Canada's statement that it is now supporting the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, will there be any changes forthcoming for the Ministry of Indigenous Relations?

Mr. Feehan: Well, we were very pleased in the ministry to have the government of Canada catch up with us, frankly. You know, up until two days ago the federal government was actually an objector

to the United Nations declaration. You know that a year ago we took on this responsibility and have been following along very carefully with all of the community involved. So we are very happy that they have decided to join us in the work that's going on. We will work closely with the minister. I do have a phone call set up with the minister for later today, I understand, to make sure that the two programs, whatever it is that they start to do federally and our program, work closely together. We're looking forward to helping them as they move forward into the process we've already begun.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Great. Thank you.

With that and the monies that were announced in the federal budget and with the announcement the other day, how will that affect your budget, and will any changes have to be made?

Mr. Feehan: I'm sorry. You're asking: will we be receiving any federal monies with regard to this? Or are you asking about our own internal monies with regard . . .

Mr. Hanson: Well, I know that there were some substantial changes in the federal budget, and based on the decision of the recognition of the Métis as First Nations having full status on settlements and off, is there any . . .

Mr. Feehan: It's an excellent question. I think that we will have to take some time to find out how the federal government will actually play this out. We, of course, will work very closely with them. We already have a very close relationship with them on a variety of issues, but they haven't made any particular declaration that they're going to flow money directly to the provinces. We, on the other hand, are not waiting for that. We're constructing already a series of requests and conversations with the federal government about how they might participate in the work that we have going forward.

Mr. Hanson: Just another question on that line. I've got a meeting with the council from Goodfish Lake, I believe, next Friday. They've been allotted some money, and it's a very much-needed project. The road going north into their community is treacherous, especially after a rain or a snowstorm. They've been given some federal money to upgrade and possibly pave that road. Is there any crossjurisdiction where we could help out as a province with that project?

Mr. Feehan: Well, we have a variety of programs, which I'm sure we'll hear about today, which they can look at, but a specific request like that: we would have to look to see if they've made an application and, if so, under which program they may have made that. You know, we're always willing to work not only from our own ministry but also from the ministries of Transportation and Infrastructure to make those kinds of projects move forward.

Mr. Hanson: That's great. Well, I'll update you personally after I meet with them and see where they're at.

Mr. Feehan: That would be excellent. I look forward to it. Sounds like a good thing to get together on.

Mr. Hanson: I've driven that road myself. I'll tell you: they have school buses coming down there every day, and, man, they have some good drivers.

Mr. Feehan: Well, as you know, I've been travelling the province, and I'm learning first-hand about the roads in some of the indigenous communities, so we'll be concerned about it as well.

Mr. Hanson: Very good. Thank you.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, David.

Mr. Hanson: Following that same vein of questioning, I'm going to bring up the Blue Quills university in my community of St. Paul. They also have some infrastructure issues and road issues right in the community. I've been trying to work with the municipality as well because there will be a lot of money coming into our community because of that university in our community, and I think we need to work together at all levels of government and try and help them to do some improvements there. They're expecting to have 400 students there next year, so it's going to be a great boon for our community.

Mr. Feehan: You may know that I taught at that university about six years over my career, and I'm very much committed to the great work that they're doing in the community. They have brought together a whole series of people to support indigenous education, and I often remind people as I go throughout the province that because of my work there I know more indigenous people with a PhD than most people know with a PhD. So I'm a big fan of Blue Quills and hope to work closely with them in the future.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. I've been out there a few times, and they're doing a great job out there.

Mr. Feehan: They are.

Mr. Hanson: I'm actually looking forward. They're having a ceremony in June that I hope to attend if I can squeeze it in, as long as we're not here in session.

Mr. Feehan: I think you govern that more than I do.

Mr. Hanson: Now I think I'll get back to my line of questioning before I get daggers shot at me from my assistant. On page 154, ministry support services, I'd like to spend a couple of minutes just on line item 1.1, the minister's office. It says that the minister's office budget was increased substantially from the previous government. In 2014-15 the official actuals were \$305,000. Then we see that \$550,000 was budgeted for 2015-16, and now for 2016-17 we're estimating that the cost will increase by \$92,000. That's a substantial increase for a smaller ministry. Can you just enlighten us as to exactly what it is for? Are you hiring more staff?

Mr. Feehan: Well, frankly, the more staff that we're hiring is me. The increase in the budget is largely to do with the fact that in the prior situation the minister was responsible for two portfolios and, as a result, could divide the ministry budget amongst both Indigenous Relations and the other portfolio, Justice, that she had. Now that that is no longer true, we have to return to what was a fairly standard level of budgeting that occurred prior to that. Right now we have four FTEs working in the minister's office, so we're still actually one of the smallest. If you look at the list of all of the ministries, we're the third-smallest ministry budget, so we're still quite tightly packed. Five hundred and sixty-five thousand dollars of our budget is for salaries and benefits for those four FTEs, \$30,000 is for travel, and \$45,000 is for the office equipment, supplies, telecom, all of those other factors.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you very much. That makes sense.

I would say that in a province the size of ours \$30,000 on a travel budget is probably a little light.

Mr. Feehan: Well, yes. As you know, I made a commitment in the first year to go to every single First Nations community and all of the settlements, and we are well on pace for that, by the way, I'm

happy to say. We may find that we're pushing that budget a little bit, but we're trying to be very efficient as we do it, working together with the ministry as well, going together, single cars, all of those kinds of things one does to try to keep within a budget. But if there's one line in the budget I break in this year, if it's the travel budget, I'll be proud to come back and defend that next year.

Mr. Hanson: I'm not telling you to throw more money at it. I'm just saying that it's money well spent if we can get it done.

Mr. Feehan: I was hoping that I could go back into the House saying that you were . . .

Mr. Hanson: Maybe we can ride together on occasion.

Mr. Feehan: Sure. You know, let me also remind you that if ever I'm in the communities that you represent, I'm more than happy to have you join us.

Mr. Hanson: I'd appreciate that. Thank you.

I can't help notice that \$92,000 has been removed from line item 6.2, the aboriginal consultation office. Is that part of the transfer?

Mr. Feehan: This is simply a correction of a financial transfer that was made over a year ago. They removed some money from one pocket and moved it into another pocket, and now this year they are simply bringing it back in again to return it to its original funding level.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you.

Carrying on with page 154, First Nations and Métis relations, in looking at line item 2, First Nations and Métis relations has been given 15 per cent of the budget, which is quite significant. The question I do have is: would the resources that are going to be made available to Treaty 8 First Nations, outlined in the new protocol agreement by this government that this government has made, be coming from this line item?

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. There is \$300,000 that is being dedicated from that budget into the protocol agreement with Treaty 8 First Nations.

Mr. Hanson: Sir, you answered two questions in one. That was my next question. Thanks.

Okay. Also, has money been set aside in this budget for similar agreements that you may be working on with treaties 6 and 7 specifically?

Mr. Feehan: Yes. We are just starting that process. With Treaty 7, actually, we do hope to have an agreement although Treaty 7 is in the process of splitting between the Blackfoot Confederacy and the non-Blackfoot communities in Treaty 7. We are proceeding with the Blackfoot Confederacy in order to fulfill a protocol agreement. Then we will ultimately have four agreements, and money has been set aside in very much the same way. As you know, Treaty 8 covers 24 of the 48 indigenous communities in this province, so that was the largest piece. However, we have set aside an equal amount of money for the other treaty organizations.

9:30

Mr. Hanson: Good. Thank you.

Also on the same line item, will grant money be coming out of this? If so, what type of grants would be available?

Mr. Feehan: Are you asking about the First Nations development fund?

Mr. Hanson: Yeah.

Mr. Feehan: The First Nations development fund is largely flow-through money from the casinos, so it is almost all grant money that comes out of that. There are five First Nations casinos that are considered indigenous casinos. That money comes to the federal government – I don't know why I said that. To the provincial government.

Mr. Hanson: Please don't send it to the federal government.

Mr. Feehan: I won't.

Then it is divided not only amongst the five nations that have the casinos, but it is also divided amongst all other indigenous communities. It is done through the First Nations development fund. They apply for grants. That money is then distributed. In fact, the greatest part of my budget is actually flow-through funding as opposed to money that I somehow acquire from the government of Alberta. It actually comes from casinos.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Good.

Can you give examples of some of the projects that were funded in the last year?

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. Maybe someone can just find the total number of grants that are there. I know I've seen it, but I can't draw it up in my head.

An example under economic development would be the Cold Lake First Nations hotel construction, which was about \$37 million, and the Little Red River Cree Nation barge repairs, which were \$20,000. It gives you a sense of the range in which we do this funding. An example under social development would be the Alexander First Nation elders' lodge, which I had a chance to go out and visit when I was out at Alexander, which is \$234,000 in total.

The total number of grants given last year was 331. It's quite a range of possible grants that are given.

Mr. Hanson: So no project is too big or too small.

Mr. Feehan: That's right. The focus of it is: what is it that this community needs in order to move ahead? As I travel the province, I've seen some pretty fantastic things. You know, I was down on the Blood reserve and saw the big omnplex that they built there. They have their library in there, they have their elders' meeting space in there, they have their gymnasium in there, and they have their weight room in there. It is a central focus of the community and is helping to create programs for kids in a place where they don't have a lot of other programs. They're not in the middle of the city. They need a place to go.

Mr. Hanson: Exactly.

Mr. Feehan: When I was at O'Chiese, for example, I saw the brand new grocery store that they built, a gas station/grocery store on the highway on the reserve, the only grocery store, actually, on the reserve, again, you know, providing services not only to the O'Chiese community but to the larger community around. We're really helping the community to build industry and then also helping them to engage in that industry with the wider community around them, which I think is very positive on both the social and economic levels.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. I think so, too. A couple of my top priorities are education and self-sufficiency on First Nations and Métis settlements as well. Okay. Thank you very much, Minister.

Last year in the minister's opening remarks she mentioned that the department received a 5 per cent reduction, or \$2.3 million, under the previous government. That was in Budget 2015. Under this government it would be given an additional \$1 million to implement objectives of the UN declaration . . .

Mr. Feehan: Yes.

Mr. Hanson: . . . and for other projects. She further stated that an additional \$3 million would be given for each additional year thereafter from 2016 to 2018. She mentioned that part of those increases would be to support First Nations engagement tables. Will any of those increases be used for the treaties' resources to participate in discussions, and can you please show me under which line item those would be added?

Mr. Feehan: The line item is on page 154, line item 2. First Nations and Métis relations is the line item that you're looking for. Budget 2016 includes an increase of more than \$2 million. That includes the \$1 million on the Premier's priority to engage indigenous people on the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, and that's to help focus on things.

Specifically to your question, \$750,000 is to engage meaningfully with First Nations and Métis on enhanced consultation, including the renewal of the First Nations consultation policy but also the settlement Métis consultation policy. As you know, we are also working on a nonsettlement Métis consultation policy.

Of course, there is also a specific \$225,000 for indigenous women's initiatives at the community level. This year I am very proud to say that we gave \$100,000 to the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, which had never had core funding from us before, always project funding. You may know them from the Esquao awards and other projects they're engaged in. We're really trying to make an increased commitment particularly to involve women in being successful in the community.

Mr. Hanson: Very good. Thank you.

Continuing with line item 2, in last year's budget there was an additional line item. It was for the Northern Alberta Development Council, and Economic Development and Trade has now been made responsible for it. Online there is an NADC mandate and roles document which states that NADC "is an advisory agency currently accountable to the Minister of Aboriginal Relations . . . [and the minister is] responsible for providing advice and guidance regarding northern development." Will the Minister of Indigenous Relations be collaborating with the minister of economic development to help provide this advice, or has the agreement changed?

Mr. Feehan: Well, as you know, the line item itself has been moved to Economic Development and Trade because we needed them to be part of that. One of the things that I think is really important for you to understand is that our ministry is not the ministry that does a lot of the particular funding of projects and so on other than the flow-through grants, as much as we spend a great deal of our time working with every other ministry.

The simple answer to your question is: yes, I am. But it also reflects the work that we do overall. Every single ministry works with our ministry in order to ensure that whatever they're doing, they're also involving the First Nations people. It's really the focus of our protocol agreements, as you know. Each of the protocol agreements has set up a number of tables where the chiefs from Treaty 8, the one that we have signed now, will actually sit down at

the table with each of these ministers and particularly work through the issues that are relevant to that ministry.

Yes, we are there. We find our role in those situations to be largely a co-ordinating one to ensure that the First Nations people have the resources they need. When they come to the table, they don't want to sit there with a minister with 10 supports around them but with no supports themselves. We ensure that they have the wherewithal to hire experts, get the reports that they need, have their travel and accommodation expenses paid to attend all the functions that they need to attend. As a result, when they come to the table, they feel like they are truly partners who are having an open discussion at an equal level.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you.

The next question. With the Supreme Court ruling extending rights to Métis and nonstatus Indians, I would like to know if any plans have been made as to how the federal government and the provincial government will be co-ordinating supports.

Mr. Feehan: Well, we were very happy to see the Daniels decision, which I assume you're referring to, because I think that it reflects a reality that, in fact, Alberta has been way ahead of other provinces on. Let me just spend one moment to say thank you to the Conservative Party in the past. I know I'm sometimes asked in the House to recognize that, so I will. In this province we have been ahead of every other province in terms of our recognition of Métis rights. We're the only province in the country that has Métis settlements. We have eight of them, and their land mass is quite substantive. Most of the Métis settlements are much larger than most of the reserves, as you know. We will be working with the federal government to determine what the implications of the Daniels decision are.

From our perspective, we are already moving forward not only on the settlement but on the nonsettlement Métis people, working largely with the Métis Nation of Alberta Association and, of course, with the Métis locals, but we also understand that they don't represent all of those people. We're discovering ways to work with the whole group of the Métis people.

It also means, then, that we have to sit down and work with the federal government. It's a new decision, so specific ways of working with them on things have not necessarily been defined, but we are going to continue to do that over the near future. One of the things we've been really committed to is spending more time with the federal government than in the past. When I asked about that relationship between the two bodies in the past, it has been quite minimal. We have decided that we're going to up that because we have to work closely together.

9:40

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you.

Yeah, they may have to rejig their budget because the \$8.3 billion that they've allotted over the next five years only included \$25 million for Métis settlements and gradings with that, so they're going to have some rejigging to do.

Mr. Feehan: They have a lot, but you know what? They can learn a lot from us. We are way ahead. You know, we have the long-term agreement with the Métis settlements. Again, thank you to Premier Getty, who helped get some of that going. I don't mind giving credit where credit is due. Alberta, actually, is ahead on this file, and I think we'll work with the federal government to help them catch up.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. That being said, in the last year I've heard a lot about the Metis Settlements Act and some of the clauses in there

that haven't been fulfilled at this point. That's going back to 1990, so we're 26 years behind on that. Some things haven't been fulfilled there. Is there going to be any reopening and discussions of that due to the federal decision?

Mr. Feehan: Are you asking about the long-term agreement with our Métis settlements now?

Mr. Hanson: Yeah, I am.

Mr. Feehan: I have had a very deep engagement with this over the last little while because the renewal was required to be signed by the end of March. Sorry; was it the end of April? By the end of March. I've only been here three months, but it feels like a year. So we worked with the Métis settlements council together on that.

One of the Métis communities, Paddle Prairie, had made the decision to withdraw from the long-term agreement last year. Their notice was given in July of last year, and after a year it comes into effect, in July of this year. So they have chosen to stay with the old agreement, which, unfortunately, leads to them being out of the picture a little, but we're working very hard on bringing them back in. The other groups all agreed to make some amendments because there were some problems with meeting some of the steps in the LTA along the way.

I spent a lot of time. I visited many of the settlements. I visited with the general council on a number of occasions, and of course the ministry staff works with them, I would assume, on a daily basis, in fact. As a result, we understand that there are some problems with the way the arrangement was set up in the past, both in terms of its general structure of having to require all eight settlements to do exactly the same thing, which doesn't always work, and as well the nature of the remuneration expected of the individual citizens on the settlements and how that goes back into the system as a way of contributing to their costs.

I made the commitment in March of this year to reopen the long-term agreement with the Métis settlement communities, and we are initiating that process. It hasn't quite started yet only because they had their own internal elections and were changing council and did not want the old council beginning a process that was about to be replaced by a new council. That election occurred last week, so we are looking forward to initiating that process now.

Mr. Hanson: Good. Thank you.

Next question. How will Indigenous Relations be collaborating with the Ministry of Health and the federal government to make sure that issues such as Jordan's principle can be avoided with Métis settlements and off-settlement people?

Mr. Feehan: Well, I think that it's very important that we start by saying that Alberta has recognized Jordan's principle, and we are acting on that basis. I think that's combined also with the concern that came out of the human rights tribunal decision in February of this year that the federal government has been inadequately funding and making it difficult on reserves for services to be appropriately applied. As a result, our ministry has made some decisions about moving ahead with many things, largely based on the notion of Jordan's principle.

Our first primary concern is that indigenous people, Métis or First Nations, are indeed Alberta citizens and therefore should be receiving the kinds of services that they would receive on- or off-reserve or on- or off-settlement. So we are moving forward on that basis. Of course, we have to work with the federal government because we have to be very careful not to proceed at such a pace that the federal government just simply rescinds its responsibilities

and says: well, you're providing all the schooling and health care and everything else. So we are being cautious in that way, but we are also proceeding.

For example, I know you've asked about health, but I can give you a quick example in terms of education. We have signed the Kee Tas Kee Now agreement, in which we don't build the school or staff the teachers but we can do all of the wraparound services that make it possible for children to be successful.

The same principle can be applied not only in education but in health care and other areas of the federal-provincial relationship, where we simply determine what it is that will actually help the people be successful. If they are indeed successful, then that's going to be a lot less expensive for us in the province as well. That's our long-term goal. It does mean in the interim that we are going to be fronting some money on Jordan's principle, that we don't wait for the federal government. We are fronting some money. We're trying to make the programs work well. We're trying to make sure the health care services are adequate and directly related to the needs of First Nations people, and that means available in their communities. In future you may find us putting some money through our health system on those issues.

Mr. Hanson: That's good to hear because in a lot of the situations I ran into, the answers that the people, First Nations and Métis, get are: "Oh, this is a federal issue" or "No, this is a provincial issue" or "Oh, this is a municipal issue." What I'd like to see is that instead of having three separate entities where there are cracks in between that people can fall through, there's a little bit of overlap there and we can work together to make sure that things like this don't happen, right?

Mr. Feehan: Well, as I said, we are absolutely committed to the notion that these are Alberta citizens. You know, it's ridiculous if they have a school on the reserve or on the settlement and there's a separate school sometimes literally across the street, and the children receiving education services on the reserve get somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$6,000 to \$7,000 per student in terms of federal transfers whereas we in the provincial system are paying double that in the school that's literally across the street. Of course, children often are in the school at one time and then go across the street to the provincial school and then come back. That's just not a functional way to run the system.

Mr. Hanson: Correct me if I'm wrong. If they're going to school off-reserve, they get both federal and provincial funding – correct? – which makes it very unfair for the First Nations.

Mr. Feehan: It's a very complicated issue. The funding doesn't go directly to the school or it doesn't come to Alberta. It actually goes to the reserve, and the reserve has to pay that funding into the local school system. There are some complications there. I know that the Minister of Education is actually meeting this week on the problems inherent in that system. We have identified the problem, and we're working to resolve that problem. I look forward over the next year to being able to report a better flow-through mechanism of some nature. It's a big, complicated problem that has essentially been ignored for a hundred years.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. Well, I'm glad to hear that they're building a new school in Ashmont because it's got a very high population from both Goodfish and Saddle Lake that go there. I think they're looking at enrolment of about 700 students. I just hope we don't run into the same issues we did with the Two Hills Mennonite School. I'm sure that they're going to do some homework before they start drilling.

Next question. Again on page 154, indigenous women's initiatives and research. Part of the \$3 million this government promised last year was to go to funding to meet the federal, provincial, and territorial commitments stemming from the national round-table on missing and murdered indigenous women and was said to lead the development on an action plan for indigenous women. There is a \$200,000 increase from last year's budget under this line item. Is that part of the promises made from last year?

Mr. Feehan: Yes. We have met with, of course, the federal-provincial-territorial governments in order to work on the national round-table. Actually, within two weeks of my becoming minister, I attended the round-table that occurred in Winnipeg and at that time was able to bring a report from the province of Alberta on the work that we are doing as the lead on the socioeconomic action plan on murdered and missing women. We have taken primary responsibility in the country to design a program of enhancement of socioeconomic well-being for indigenous women. As a result, that money has been put toward that program under our own women's initiative here in the province.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you.

In the new protocol agreement the government has signed with Treaty 8, it says that tables dealing with women and children were to be established immediately. Was money allocated for the women and children table from this particular part of the budget, and what would be the parameters around that?

9:50

Mr. Feehan: It isn't money specifically from this indigenous women's initiative research line item. It is from the First Nations and Métis relations line item, and that's where the \$300,000 is allocated for all of those tables. The table on women and children is no different than the table on economic development or health or anything else. They're all being funded through the same line item.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you.

Next question. The First Nations development fund. I understand that this money comes from the casino revenue from the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission and is used specifically for projects which we've discussed previously. Last year the minister stated that \$10 million was to address specific infrastructure projects plus an additional \$8 million, as outlined in the long-term agreement with Métis settlements; \$7.7 million for aboriginal business investment fund; \$6.3 million for consultation capacity to First Nations; \$2.3 million for the Canada-Alberta job grant and the aboriginal economic partnership program; \$1.5 million for funding of the Métis Nation of Alberta; just over a million for the native friendship centres and northern Alberta development annual grants; \$28.6 million was used for 235 full-time positions to staff the department; \$7.2 million allocated for flood mitigation; \$2.4 million for legal support; and \$1.3 million for operations. The budget also included a one-time \$8 million in capital funding to support critical infrastructure projects in the Métis settlements.

My question to you, Minister: is the First Nations development fund required to do an annual report, and when could we expect to see a report on where the budgeted money was spent? The reason we ask that question is that the last report that we can find is from 2013-14.

Mr. Feehan: I just want to comment on the fact that – just listening to your question, why we need to discuss it a bit is because you're essentially rolling up line items from, actually, a number of different programs in that list that you gave, so I can't just simply

say: yes, that's all First Nations development fund money. It's not. You've included pockets from a number of different lines, and that's fine. I'm sure you still want a report on all of them.

Mr. Hanson: That's what the minister gave us last year. That's why we asked.

Mr. Feehan: Okay. Well, the numbers are indeed accurate. They just aren't all simply under that singular fund that you identified them under.

Mr. Hanson: If you can, at your leisure . . .

Mr. Feehan: Okay. Well, the question that you did ask that specifically was about the annual report – I just happen to have a copy of the report that's coming out now. So there will be another one out online very soon that identifies all of the particular grants that are there. You can also receive all of that information by going to the government of Alberta general website because, of course, all grants are listed on that general website, not on the Indigenous Relations website.

Mr. Hanson: Good. Thank you.

Okay. Next question. I'm getting prodded to hurry along here. Can the minister please provide us with a brief outline of any changes that might have been made to this budget? I realize you've only been in there three months, but I imagine you came in and tweaked it a little bit.

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. That's okay. Well, there are a number of smaller pieces and changes that we can talk about. There are some priority differences that have happened. I mean, the two most recent ones, for example, would be a hundred thousand dollars in core funding being given to the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women because we felt we needed to increase our priorities for women. They've never had core funding before. We also noticed that there have been no increases for the friendship centre programs. In fact, there were no increases for somewhere in the neighbourhood – my number might be slightly wrong – of 15 years or something. So we increased that budget by a hundred thousand dollars as well immediately.

Mr. Hanson: In that vein, a hundred thousand dollars to the friendship centres: how many friendship centres do we have currently in Alberta?

Mr. Feehan: There are 20 friendship centres. They have a central body, and then they have 20 friendship centres throughout the province.

Mr. Hanson: Was that money allocated evenly amongst them all?

Mr. Feehan: That is my understanding, but the money was actually granted to the central body, and they will make the decision about how that gets allocated throughout the province.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. That makes more sense.

Mr. Feehan: I can tell you that as part of our concern about working more with the urban aboriginal populations – you know, it represents, actually, over 50 per cent of the indigenous population in this province – we are going to be taking some time to look at our relationship with the indigenous population in urban centres, and that may involve some further focus on the friendship centres or some other programs. There are a variety of programs that are possible to work with.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. I know they do some great work in our community. I just would like to – I agree with that funding allocation, if it's more focused, rather than spreading it all out.

Mr. Feehan: I can tell you about some of the other changes as well that happened. There was a decrease of \$688,000 in this budget because there was a 2 per cent reduction in salaries, wages, supplies, and services just as a way of showing restraint. Our ministry did that along with all of the other ministries. As well, there is a decrease of \$662,000 due to scheduling reductions for the southern Alberta floods simply because we are finishing that.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you.

The next question I'm going to defer to my colleague here. He's been poking me in the back.

Mr. MacIntyre: I didn't poke you. I whipped you. It's different. I have a question for you, Minister, regarding carbon taxation.

Mr. Feehan: Yes.

Mr. MacIntyre: In your business plan on page 84, and I'll paraphrase a bit:

The ministry develops policies . . . provides advice and guidance to the ministries of Energy, and Environment and Parks on their Crown obligations to consult and engage with First Nations and Métis in the development of land and resource plans, policies and regulations,

et cetera. Minister, will you please describe for us the extent of the Crown's obligations when it comes to exempting aboriginal and Métis persons or settlements from this government's proposed carbon tax?

Mr. Feehan: Well, as you know, direct taxation of indigenous people – to this point that has meant only First Nations people, by the way, because it's a federal government decision – is not possible, so you can't do a direct tax. As a result, all First Nations people with an INAC card will be able to not pay any kind of carbon tax increase on reserves, so if you go to a gas station on-reserve or any other services on-reserve, you will not pay any of that money.

That's not necessarily true for the Métis people because they haven't been included in that process up until this date. As a result, we will be looking forward to the decisions of the federal government on how they're going to include the Métis people subsequent to the Daniels decision. It will be partly determined by federal jurisdiction as opposed to provincial jurisdiction at this point.

Mr. MacIntyre: Okay. This leads to another question that I have regarding corporations that are either wholly or majority owned by a band or First Nations persons or a settlement or persons operating a business on a reserve or a settlement. How is the carbon tax going to apply in those situations?

Mr. Feehan: Well, the principles that are involved will remain the same, but I think that we have to defer this particular question to the Department of Energy and the Department of Environment and Parks because they are the ones that will be sitting down and negotiating specifically with the businesses that are involved about how the climate change leadership plan will influence them. It's something that, of course, we will be involved in in the sense that we are always at the table, but Treasury Board and Finance are the actual determinants of those kinds of processes.

Mr. MacIntyre: From what you understand at the moment, then, that door of discussion is open to negotiate how the carbon tax will apply to their businesses?

Mr. Feehan: Well, what I need to say is that I would be presumptuous to determine what is happening in that conversation between Treasury Board and Finance and the communities, so I would ask you to bring that question to Treasury Board and Finance.

Mr. Hanson: Are you done?

Mr. MacIntyre: Yeah. I think I am done. Thank you.

Mr. Hanson: Getting back into the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal under line item 5, I see that the last annual report, again, is from 2014. I'm just wondering when we can expect to see a 2015 annual report. Is that also forthcoming?

10:00

Mr. Feehan: Just give me one moment. I'll see if we can get a date.

My understanding is that it is issued on an annual basis, and that's 90 days from the end of the year, which would be April 1 and take us into July.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you very much.

The next question. Under line 6, consultation and land claims, I see there's been a slight increase to the bottom line by \$471,000. Last year the minister mentioned that the reason for the increase was because the ESRD office came over, because the office wasn't fully staffed, and that was what accounted for the discrepancy. Was the staff sent to the ACO or the stewardship and policy integration office?

Mr. Feehan: I'm sorry. We're a little unclear on the question. Can you just run through that again?

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. Okay. I'll go through it here one more time. Last year the minister mentioned that the reason for the increase was because the ESRD office came over, because the office wasn't fully staffed, and that was what accounted for the discrepancy. Was the staff sent to the ACO or to the stewardship and policy integration office? It's under line 6.

Mr. Feehan: Right. To the stewardship and policy integration office is where the staff went.

Mr. Hanson: Good. Thank you.

I see that there has been a slight decrease to the ACO and also to line item 6.1, program support and land claims. There has been a decrease of \$279,000. However, there's been an additional increase of \$825,000 to item 6.3, stewardship and policy integration. Would that be because of that staff change?

Mr. Feehan: The increase in the stewardship line item is the \$750,000 that was given for the First Nations consultation policy. As you know, we're repealing Bill 22, and as a result we're not collecting dollars from industry along the way, so this money has been allocated to ensure that consultation continues meanwhile.

Mr. Hanson: Just a quick question on that stewardship and policy integration: how many employees are working under that umbrella?

Mr. Feehan: Under stewardship and policy: 44.

Mr. Hanson: Forty-four? Okay. Thank you.

Approximately how much of the budget under line item 6.3 would be designated for salaries?

Mr. Feehan: I do have the number here. It's \$4.9 million in salaries and benefits for the 44.

Mr. Hanson: It's \$4.9 million. Okay. Thank you.

Does the ACO deal with matters of the environment, and how much would be budgeted for that?

Mr. Feehan: For the environment? Meaning what?

Mr. Hanson: Well, in dealing with environmental issues, I guess, on First Nations.

Mr. Feehan: No, if I understand the question.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you.

Line item 7, policy and planning: what exactly does that line item include?

Mr. Feehan: This division provides strategic support to the ministry in influencing the government of Alberta's policy with regard to economic and social issues of indigenous peoples and communities and intergovernmental relations. It provides policy and support and advice regarding ministry initiatives and interdepartmental work. It's a big part of our integrating across ministries to make sure that it isn't just the Indigenous Relations ministry that is working with the community.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you.

Going on to page 154, under 2013 Alberta flooding, last year the minister mentioned that the government would continue to support First Nations as a result of the devastating flood that took place in 2013. She mentioned that work was under way to support affected communities and businesses. I see that not all the funds that were budgeted last year are forecast to be used. The budget for 2016-17 has been decreased minimally.

Understanding that the Siksika and Stoney Nakoda nations are leading the repair and building efforts and that there was a concern under strategic risks on page 81 in the business plan that there could be potential for funding shortfalls, with that in mind I have a couple of questions. How is it that not all of the funding is forecast to be used from last year's budget, yet there is a so-called shortfall?

Mr. Feehan: Well, the two nations have a slightly different story to them, so if you'll just give me a second to kind of run through them. The Stoney Nakoda Nation, which, of course, involves the Bearspaw, Chiniki, and Wesley nations, just outside of the Banff-Calgary corridor area, had 540 homes that had been identified as being affected, and that, of course, involved 3,403 individuals. The repairs on those homes are largely coming to conclusion now and by the end of this year will be completely done, so that number remains accurate and is reflective of what's going on.

The situation on the Siksika Nation is slightly different. They have made a decision to control their own flood recovery and have been finding that they have some difficulties there. There were 138 homes that were impacted, 640 individuals. They have made the decision on the reserve, their chief and council, to move those homes completely from a lower flood plain to an upper community, alongside an existing community that they have, for obvious long-term reasons, that they don't want this to be happening over and over again. They've agreed to leave I believe it's four of the homes down in the flood zone because they are elders who just determined they would rather live in their own home and take the chance,

frankly, that they will never live to see another flood. That's how they put it when I visited them.

Mr. Hanson: Yes. They can be quite stubborn.

Mr. Feehan: But some of the members in the community were a bit concerned about moving up and wanted to have greater input into the decision. As a result there has been some delay in terms of the work that's being done on the Siksika reserve. The money is allocated, and it is moving ahead, but because there has been a delay in the process, we're not completely sure what the final, ultimate dollars will be. We anticipate that we'll be completing that flood recovery within budget at this time, though.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. So you don't anticipate that any further funding might be needed to complete repairs?

Mr. Feehan: Not at this time.

Mr. Hanson: You think it's going to fall within that number?

Mr. Feehan: You know, that one is a work in progress, so we're keeping an eye on it, but there have been no requests for additional funds from us, and the chief and council, when we were down visiting just a couple of weeks ago, indicated that they are moving ahead in spite of some of the protests that have occurred in their own community. We were able to see with our own eyes that they indeed had assigned the land and were working toward construction of those homes.

Mr. Hanson: Good. Thank you.

Under First Nations and Métis relations, under capital grants, last year the minister said that \$5.6 million was given to the Lubicon situation, and in the long-term agreement the total allocated was \$11 million: \$3 million in the previous year and \$8 million in one-time capital funding to support critical infrastructure projects in the Métis settlements last year. Understanding that the one-time funding would be done with, would the \$3.2 million under line item 2 be going to Métis settlements? Last year the minister alluded that it was housing related in the long-term agreement for Métis settlements. Is that correct?

Mr. Feehan: Yes.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you.

Going to the business plan, page 81, key strategy 1.1, under the second bullet it says: "Ensuring the government's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is reflected in the UN Declaration implementation plan." When is this plan targeted to be completed?

10:10

Mr. Feehan: Well, we're working very closely with the indigenous communities on this one. We also are working with them with regard to the consultation policy, and it's become very clear that these are intertwined phenomena, that the United Nations declaration is seeking increased consultation on a wide variety of mechanisms, so we are actually drawing these two pieces together and working with the indigenous communities on that.

You may know that we did ask all of the indigenous communities to do a self-reflective piece on the United Nations declaration, and they did so and submitted those documents earlier this year. We also had every single ministry do the same thing. Subsequently our ministry put together all of the information that was submitted across the great number of people that were involved, including the Métis Nation, the friendship centres, the settlements, and, of course,

the First Nations, and have compiled some documentation which is now being used to go back to the communities to talk about how we will be moving forward.

Since we're also starting the review on the consultation, we are taking those two together and having further conversations about them. With Treaty 8, for example, we have a table set up where we can have these kinds of direct conversations, but of course it's happening across the board at this time. Because of the nature of the process that we are undergoing, we are not establishing an end date for this conversation. In fact, when I speak to the First Nations people about the nature of engagement, they want to make it very clear that engagement is not a product that you achieve by having a written piece of paper one day where you can say, "Yes, we've engaged you" but, rather, a relationship and a way in which we continue to conduct our business with them.

Yes, there will be reports that come forward and move forward in time about where we are at, but instead what you'll find is that we are constantly and continually at the tables with the indigenous communities on every subject possible, which is the point of the protocol tables, that they can actually sit with the minister and have those conversations fully and completely.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you.

Under bullet 3 it states: "Working with First Nations to advance matters of mutual interest with the federal government, including access to clean and safe drinking water and ensuring that jurisdictional conflicts do not prevent children from receiving services they need." I think we had that discussion previously. In what ways have you been working with the federal government to clear up these issues, and have you made any progress in this regard?

Mr. Feehan: We have had some opportunity to meet with the federal minister of indigenous relations already once this year. As you know, I have another phone call set up to work with her on the next issue. One of the things that I found on entering this ministry is that there hasn't been that much conversation between the provincial Minister of Indigenous Relations and the federal minister over many, many years.

Mr. Hanson: Absolutely.

Mr. Feehan: So we have been working within our ministry to talk about: how do we correct that and make sure these things move forward? We have talked about having tripartite conversations around a number of things. In fact, when we set up the protocol tables, we made it very clear with the First Nations people that we would be most happy to invite the federal government to any of those tables so that it is a tripartite conversation and not just between the provincial government and the First Nations people.

Mr. Hanson: That's very important. Like I mentioned before, when you have that separation, you have cracks, and people fall through the cracks.

Mr. Feehan: That is a major concern. Every time I go out, I remind everyone in the room that these are Albertans and that they will be treated fully as Albertans and will receive all of the services necessary. If then, after the fact, we have to go to the federal government and ask them to step up to the plate because they're not stepping up to the plate, we will do that, but we won't wait for them in order to proceed. It's essentially based on Jordan's principle. While that's a medical principle, we also are treating it much more broadly.

Mr. Hanson: We have a responsibility in that regard, for sure.

Is the ministry collaborating with the Minister of Health and federal counterparts to ensure there is a constant stream of communication and reporting done on the conditions of the First Nation and Métis settlement communities?

Mr. Feehan: Yes. Our Health ministry collects the data that they have available, and that is shared federally.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you very much.

The next question. In the last bullet on page 81 it states: "Providing support to other ministries in improving the availability of First Nations language programs and the representation of Indigenous culture and history in Alberta's school curriculum in consultation with Indigenous leaders and Elders." Would you please clarify in what way this ministry is providing support to those ministries?

Mr. Feehan: Well, recently I had a chance to meet with the provincial School Boards Association and have a conversation with them. One of the things that we made very clear is that there are two pieces that need to be done going forward. One of them is that we need to make sure that the curriculum for on-reserve schools is enhanced so that it really does reflect the lived experience of the children that are going to those schools. It needs to have a deep history of indigenous experience. It has to be delivered in a way which is consistent with indigenous people. We also said that that's not simply good enough; we also need to make sure that all the nonindigenous students throughout the province have a much deeper understanding of our own indigenous history.

Mr. Hanson: I know it's already happening with some schools, but a lot of schools do tours of the Blue Quills university. They learn first-hand.

Mr. Feehan: They do.

Mr. Hanson: It's something I would recommend for all schools to add as part of their curriculum for field trips.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We'll now move on to the member from the third party.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I would like to begin by acknowledging and saying hay-hay to all of our indigenous friends, especially those upon whose land we occupy and share together here today. I want to acknowledge you, Mr. Chair, and, Minister, you and every one of the people in your department and beyond who do great work not just here today but in the past and going into the future.

Just before you go, sir, I want to acknowledge you as a colleague because – let's face it – we're all champions in this. It might be worth noting that I don't refer to myself as a shadow minister – never have – or a critic. As you know, Minister, in talking with you before, I call myself the PC advocate for Indigenous Relations. I know that you look at it that way as well, and that's a point extremely well taken.

I recognize we're not alone. We have Terri Kemball, our legislative manager that I want to acknowledge, and Ben Li, our researcher and so much more than a researcher, just an amazing Albertan as well.

Minister, I want to start by thanking you for mentioning Premier Getty and what he's done with our Métis friends and the fact that Alberta has been a national leader in indigenous relations in many respects. We all know there is a lot more to do. I do want to thank your government, though. I offered a piece of friendly advice many,

many months ago, saying: “Listen. Right now the situation is that it is called aboriginal relations and tied with Justice.” I thought, “Please change the name to Indigenous Relations and give it its own minister because it is that important,” so I am glad to see you there in this role. It’s with that spirit that I begin with some questions for you and to make a few points, hopefully, of information and assistance.

If we take a look at page 79 in the ministry business plans, the government has repeatedly promised to work on a new relationship with indigenous Albertans. I applaud you for that. I encourage you on that. It states on page 79: “a commitment to implementing the principles and objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,” or, as people often refer to it, UNDRIP. It’s also mentioned throughout the ministry business plans. Again, I appreciate that. It probably should go without saying, but perhaps you’d like to get it on the record: obviously, Minister, you’d agree that implementing UNDRIP is an important priority for your government. Correct?

Mr. Feehan: Yes.

Mr. Rodney: Okay. So you’d also agree – this is a question about other Albertans as well – that it’s important Albertans are able to hold your ministry accountable, in the true sense of the word, for progress on implementing UNDRIP, as the ministry leads the effort across all ministries?

Mr. Feehan: Well, as you know, when we first took government here in this province, we made this a central priority. The Premier has made it central to what we’re doing particularly in this ministry, but, of course, it’s important across all ministries, so we’ve asked every single ministry to be involved.

10:20

One of the things that was very clear when I had a chance to talk with Justice Sinclair – it was part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I also met with Romeo Saganash, who helped to write the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, and asked them about the process. They made it very clear that it’s not simply about, you know, having a list of tasks to engage in and then fulfilling those tasks. All would fail if the process of engaging the community in the conversation was not also consistent with the principles themselves. We can’t take the principles and say: oh, great; well, here are 25 things we’re going to do in order to fulfill that. We, of course, examined ourselves, and every single ministry across the government looked at those pieces and made the determination about places where they felt they were failing and where they could move ahead and made particular suggestions of how they could move ahead. All of that was submitted on time. As I had mentioned, we had also asked eight partners in the community to do the same thing.

We were cautioned by all the people that we were involved with, though, not to then turn that into a list of tasks that are going to be accomplished by, you know, a particular format: “By March let’s implement this one. By June let’s implement that one.” Instead they said, “Take the ideas and the notions that you have, sit down with those eight partners that you have – the Métis Nation; treaties 6, 7, and 8; the friendship centres; the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women – and have conversations with them about the nature of the implementation of the United Nations declaration because that’s how you actually fulfill the declaration, by actually being in conversation, in relationship with them.”

What they found in the past is that too often even enthusiastic, positive governments have come to them and said, “Wow; let’s get this done, and here are the six things we’re going to do” and

constructed a program of activities. As soon as they construct a program of activities, the indigenous people say: “Well, you’ve already decided what you want to do, so we’re not part of this. Why are we even at the table here?” So we have been absolutely bending over backwards to make sure that when we actually engage in this process, we are making sure that they are truly there at the table as partners who can reflect not only on the outcomes that we desire but on the process of achieving those outcomes.

Mr. Rodney: I don’t think anyone would argue with that at all, Minister, but the question was: do you agree that it’s important that Albertans are able to hold your ministry accountable for progress? Progress not just on jobs to do, as you’ve mentioned, because you don’t do the jobs without the relationship. That has to come first. But let’s be honest. No matter what background we’re from, we don’t want it just to be all talk, do we? We want action as well.

I would ask this question: how many performance measures or indicators in the business plans of the government relate to indigenous Albertans? That’s not just a to-do list – right? – because they’re measures, things that can be measurable, or indicators. I think it’s worth pointing out for the committee that Advanced Education, Agriculture and Forestry, Culture and Tourism, Economic Development and Trade, Energy, Environment and Parks, Executive Council, Human Services, Infrastructure, Justice, Service Alberta, Transportation, and Treasury Board and Finance, Minister, each have zero performance measures or performance indicators that explicitly state anything about our indigenous populations. Minister, that’s most of the ministries, and, most importantly, most of the ministries that are to be engaged. As you said, rightly, it’s not just your job; it’s everyone’s. It’s our job. Just let me ask you this. I just want to point . . .

Mr. Feehan: Well, it is unfortunate that these ministries . . .

Mr. Rodney: If I can just finish. Here’s the question. Education has one set of performance measures related to indigenous, and that’s out of five. Health has 2 out of 16. Indigenous Albertans – I guess this is the point – are represented in only 1 out of the 4 lines in each of the 2 of 16 performance indicators and measures in Labour, and Municipal Affairs has 1 out of 5 related to indigenous Albertans. I’m almost done. Seniors and Housing has one-quarter of one indicator about indigenous Albertans, and that’s out of seven. Status of Women considers indigenous Albertans in one-half of 1 of 10 indicators.

Considering what we’ve discussed at the outset, Minister – and this is not at all to be an opponent; I’m trying to be conciliatory and encourage you – how do Albertans hold the government to account when the government just hasn’t got any measures, or hardly any measures, for its progress on such an important commitment? Is this maybe on a go-forward basis that you start doing this? Is this too new? Why is it that it’s sadly lacking? I want to see this. I wouldn’t be commenting if I didn’t.

Mr. Feehan: Well, I think we’re on the same train here, but the reality is that these ministries have been around for a long time, for 40-plus years, and they haven’t been doing that all along. Suddenly we take over in government and we find that this is a complete absence across the ministries when we take over, and we understand that that has to change. So we’ve begun to establish a process of rectifying many, many years of neglect in this area.

Mr. Rodney: Well, hang on. I’m not sure that’s fair, Minister.

Mr. Feehan: Well, they weren’t in the business plans of the previous year or the year before that or the year before that as well.

Mr. Rodney: If I may say, with grace, this: UNDRIP and TRC are not things that were announced decades ago. Those are very recent.

Mr. Feehan: Oh, if you're asking specifically about UNDRIP now rather than indigenous people . . .

Mr. Rodney: I feel your pain because when I was associate minister of wellness, it was something that was more timely, that had not – it was going across all the ministries, but people either didn't recognize it formally or didn't realize that we were actually doing a lot of great work already. I'm just simply suggesting that on a go-forward basis, since UNDRIP and TRC are new, that perhaps – I'm just encouraging you and all these other departments in the future, if you could, to include performance measures and indicators. Is that something you could work on with your colleagues?

Mr. Feehan: Well, we've established the process by which that will happen, of course, by establishing the tables at which they'll be able to sit down with each of the ministers and be able to create conversations between the ministers and the indigenous communities so they'll be able to include that in every single ministry. They're no longer just coming to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations; they're going to every ministry to work on these things. Right now and over the next little while we are implementing the performance measurement framework for Indigenous Relations, and that will help us to implement the part about the United Nations declaration on indigenous peoples as well. So we actually have some particular pieces that are moving that forward. We do see it as our responsibility in this ministry to work with every ministry to make sure that they're involving indigenous people at every step along the way.

Mr. Rodney: Okay. I guess, like, let's face it – and this isn't a casual comment I throw around. I recognize that you haven't been in this position for a whole year, and there are things that happen in transition. It has been just over a year, though, for the government, and it's been about that amount of time for UNDRIP and TRC. I'm just saying, again with humility, that I was kind of hoping to see it in a number of these areas during this business plan and this cycle. If it's coming forward, Minister, I applaud you, and I wish you luck because I know it's harder than you think within a ministry, let alone crossministry.

Mr. Feehan: It does, but it really is a continual reflection of what I am saying, that if we tell the ministries to sit down and write up indigenous people and put them in their plan, then what happens is that the indigenous people come along and say: well; where did that come from? If we proceed on the basis that it's a unilateral activity on the part of government operatives, then we have absolutely missed the underlying values and point of the whole UNDRIP.

Mr. Rodney: I would never ask you to do that. I would actually caution you to do the exact opposite.

Mr. Feehan: Right. Which is why we set up the protocols to allow the tables to have the conversation, which is why we asked everybody to write in about the United Nations declaration, and we're going back to them, which is why we're setting up the conversations around the consultations with the communities and bringing those pieces together.

Mr. Rodney: Right.

Mr. Feehan: What you're going to see is a lot of conversation over the next little while because that is what the community has asked us to do. They start to get terrified when we start writing things down until we've had a conversation in which they feel completely heard, in which they've been truly engaged. They tell me on a daily basis: "You're smart. You can write things down. But if I read it and it doesn't reflect me, then, it doesn't matter how smart you are."

Mr. Rodney: Yes. I can relate because in my time in cabinet I was honoured to chair a number of meetings with a number of our First Nations friends, including – it was rather historic – all of our cabinet met with all of their leaders. It was a historic moment, and I would encourage that to continue. So I know that without a relationship there's no point in having this down. I wonder: is it your intention, though, to continue the dialogue, to have that ongoing relationship, but part of that would be progress and actual indicators of that? I think that's getting back to my point of wanting to be completely fair to our indigenous peoples, but we also need to be accountable to Albertans as well. Would you agree with that?

Mr. Feehan: Well, I absolutely think that it's my responsibility to report back to the citizens of the province about the things, the activities we're engaged in and the processes that we're engaged in that will result in good outcomes.

10:30

Right now I can tell you that in the three months that I have been a minister, I've signed the Kee Tas Kee Now agreement around schools; we've signed the renewal of the LTA, the long-term agreement, with the Métis people; we've signed the consultation agreement with the Métis settlements; we're working on the United Nations, and we've had all of those submissions; we are working on the consultation renewal; and we are working on the nonsettlement Métis consultation agreement as well. I think, you know, my three months have been full.

Mr. Rodney: No question. This is a job that never ends, does it? A person could be on 24/7, 365, and it's still not done. That's why we have great people around us to help us with everyone that is beyond these walls. That's obviously the most important thing. I do think we're speaking the same language; perhaps it's a different dialect.

Given that your business plan also speaks to future years like '17-18 and '18-19 – let's face it, Minister; this dialogue will lead to commitment, and that's fair. That's right. There are many things that are undone, again, beyond these walls. Please don't take this as a criticism, but should that not be reflected in your three-year plan? The budget should actually and accurately represent what you genuinely have planned. To actually do what's in UNDRIP and TRC, there are going to be many new expenditures. Why do we not see that in the next number of years in your budget?

Mr. Feehan: Well, the reality is that we don't know what those particular things are going to be because we haven't had those conversations come to that place. We have imaginations, on our part, about what that might be, but we haven't had agreement with the First Nations communities about what that might be. It would be presumptuous to predict any particular amounts of money. We have been committed from day one to work with the indigenous community on these things, and as necessary I will go back to the Treasury Board to ask for funds that relate to particular things.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you. That's what I needed to hear.

Mr. Feehan: But the other thing I need to also say is that we're also making the commitment that it isn't about the Ministry of Indigenous Relations . . .

Mr. Rodney: You and I both know that. I appreciate that.

Mr. Feehan: . . . so we'll be going to each of the other ministries to make sure . . .

Mr. Rodney: That's my next question. Look at that. Are you looking at my notes?

How much of Alberta's total budget will go towards indigenous Albertans' priorities, and what percentage comes from your department? I trust these are fair questions. As you've said, a lot of this is flow-through, and I get that, too, being in wellness before.

Two questions: what's the total budget from the provincial government going to indigenous Albertans, and what percentage is coming from your department?

Mr. Feehan: You know, we don't keep track of indigenous people as if they're separate, non-Albertans. We make sure that they . . .

Mr. Rodney: But there are specific programs.

Mr. Feehan: There are specific programs, and sometimes we identify them as: this is a program. Those ones are largely reflected here in my budget, the programs that are uniquely designed for the indigenous community. Like, the First Nations development fund is there. When it comes to a program like health or it comes to a program like education, we are making the commitment that the indigenous community needs to be brought in and treated like the rest of Albertans. Therefore, if we're providing services . . .

Mr. Rodney: Great. Something I've been saying for 12 years.

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. Well, too bad nobody listened.

Mr. Rodney: Honestly, I want to make sure that you have enough money and also are not completely destroying the bank, right? I mean, I say that sincerely.

Folks – and this might be for those on at least one-half of the table – this is a concern that I have. Your government plans to spend more on new debt-servicing costs, which is \$221 million between '15-16 and '16-17 – that's on page 114 of the fiscal plan – and Indigenous Relations is \$192 million. We're spending more money on new debt-servicing than on your department. I think that's a big problem.

Mr. Feehan: Well, only if you imagine that the only services that indigenous people are receiving from this province are from my ministry. I'm wanting to kind of bring you up to speed here on . . .

Mr. Rodney: My point is that if we weren't throwing that money away, we'd have twice as much money for you.

Mr. Feehan: Well, you know, you can take the questions about the overall budget to the Treasury Board conversations for estimates. It's just not a question that I can answer for the whole government. In terms of my budget here, quite clearly, my budget isn't supposed to reflect a hundred per cent of the services that indigenous people . . .

Mr. Rodney: No, and I know that, but you hear my point that if we weren't spending so much on debt servicing, we could double your budget.

Mr. Feehan: It's just not a question for estimates on Indigenous Relations, is it?

Mr. Rodney: I just wanted a question because my time is almost done. In the next five years the government has set aside more unallocated future spending than for Indigenous Relations, and I'm concerned about what that says to Albertans and the world, because perception is reality for folks out there. The government will spend more on the climate change leadership plan capital plan expenses – that's \$208 million in the fiscal plan, page 48 – than on Indigenous Relations. Folks, when we look at the big picture, I dare say that . . .

Mr. Feehan: But you're constantly comparing things that are completely unequal.

Mr. Rodney: . . . we're judged every day, and how much we spend on things also shows how much priority we give to things. I care about this. You do. I just wish we were spending more money on . . .

Mr. Feehan: But you're comparing two programs that have very different focuses. If you have the climate change plan, they're doing particular projects in order to work on particular issues . . .

Mr. Rodney: Absolutely.

Mr. Feehan: . . . all of which, by the way, the indigenous community has a right to participate in.

Mr. Rodney: Absolutely.

Mr. Feehan: They have set aside a particular sum of money that will be working particularly with indigenous communities, but they also have a number of other programs. I keep reminding the indigenous community that they have a right to apply not only to the dedicated monies but to every piece of money that's being put forward by the . . .

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

We will now take a five-minute break, and we will proceed after that. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned from 10:36 a.m. to 10:42 a.m.]

The Chair: We're now going to move on to the private members of the government caucus so that they can begin asking their questions. As soon as the minister sits down, he can perhaps start answering those questions.

Private members of the government caucus, please go ahead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We would like to share our time equally between ourselves and the minister. The MLA for Edmonton-Mill Creek and I will be addressing the questions from the government caucus. I'd also like to have a few comments at the start.

Thank you, Minister and staff, for being here this morning. I've also got to thank all indigenous peoples in the land that we occupy here today. It's important that we recognize that fact. Also, it's great that your ministry is addressing and supporting indigenous communities and settlements by supporting programs to address the recommendations of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. It's important that your ministry is doing that.

Also, on the issue of recognizing the concern and supporting the investigation of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, we commend your ministry also.

As well, you know, the ministry is committed to replacing Bill 22, the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Act, and to working

collaboratively and respectfully with First Nations to enhance their consultation capacity. We think that your ministry should be great at supporting this important objective.

We'll get into the questions. You mentioned at the outset that the 2016-17 Indigenous Relations budget decreases by \$9.9 million, or 4.9 per cent, from the 2015-16 expense budget. You attributed the bulk of the drop to one-time \$8 million capital funding for Métis settlements, which I assume is on page 154, line 2, under capital grants.

Mr. Feehan: Correct.

Mr. Rosendahl: Can you tell me about the rest of the drop in that grant, which looks and appears to be under \$300,000?

Mr. Feehan: Right. Thanks. You are correct. It is about \$272,000, by the way. The remaining amount of money is a year-over-year capital spending decrease for the Métis settlements long-term arrangement because we're still committing at this point up to \$10 million to support this agreement in 2016-2017. The Métis settlements long-term arrangement was signed July 4, 2013. It was designed to address settlement governance, long-term sustainability of communities, and to align the fiscal relationships between the province and the settlements, so the one between the province and other local governments. As part of the LTA the government of Alberta has committed \$85 million over the 10-year term of the agreement, and the Metis Settlements General Council has committed \$28.5 million of their own matching money.

It involves a number of schedules, including items such as essential services, infrastructure, housing, education, safe and healthy communities just to name a few. Some of these schedules such as infrastructure and housing have capital components. The decrease reflects less work in the capital areas for the upcoming year.

Mr. Rosendahl: Okay. Well, thank you, Minister.

As a supplement to that question, in your opening remarks you also mentioned at the outset a drop in the Canada-Alberta jobs fund. Where is this reflected in the 2016-17 budget, and what does it mean?

Mr. Feehan: Okay. Well, to start, the Canada-Alberta jobs fund is an agreement between the government of Canada and the government of Alberta to provide labour market programming for Albertans who have not been in the workforce. The agreement is administered by the Department of Labour and then is distributed to the multiple ministries in the government of Alberta. It doesn't come directly to us.

The funds provided for the Canada-Alberta jobs fund are provided by the federal government, and we receive funds from that fund for our employment partnership program. In 2015-16 Indigenous Relations had \$2.3 million for its employment partnership program. In 2016-17 it will be reduced to \$1.8 million and then in '17-18 down to \$1.3 million. The reduction in funding is required by the federal government, where those funds initiate, under the Canada-Alberta jobs fund as funds are being reallocated to the Canada-Alberta jobs grant. So they're moving from this funding program to the grant program. That's been reflected in the dollars that you're seeing here.

I'm happy to say that in 2016-2017 First Nations and Métis governments will now be eligible to access the new Canada-Alberta jobs grant due to the efforts of both the ministries of Labour and Indigenous Relations. Money has moved over. They still have access through a new granting program.

Mr. Rosendahl: Okay.

Ms Woollard: All right. Minister, it's wonderful to be here today. As you know, I've spent a good part of my life as a teacher, living and working in indigenous communities and working alongside indigenous people, and I'm very concerned about all of the issues here.

Now, given that the overarching framework of the ministry and government is centred on implementing the principles and objectives of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, can the minister speak to the steps taken by the ministry to achieve this and how this process is supported in the estimates we're considering here today?

Mr. Feehan: Right. Well, we've had a chance to speak to this a little bit this morning, but I'm very happy to keep speaking to it because it is so central to what it is that we are doing in this ministry and, in fact, in the whole government. As you know, it was a priority set by Premier Rachel Notley when we first took government. We are really committed to building a new relationship with indigenous people based on trust, mutual respect, and reconciliation.

Our work on the United Nations declaration and also on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report is a major part of that commitment. Although some of the principles and objectives in the United Nations declaration are already reflected in provincial law and policy, there are opportunities to take all kinds of action. Since July 2015 the government of Alberta ministries have participated in an internal review of the existing policies, programs, and initiatives and have conducted a preliminary analysis of the gaps and opportunities to further align with the principles and objectives of the UN declaration. The ministries provided those proposals for possible initiatives along with a preliminary analysis of resources that may be required if the proposals are to be implemented.

They also completed a review of the calls for action to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well. We have, of course, done that internally. We would also ask the community organizations to do that, but we did not presume that any of the internal suggestions would in fact be the ultimate decisions until we had had an opportunity to meet with members of the community.

10:50

The government of Alberta has had initial meetings with indigenous leaders and organizations to hear their perspectives and views on moving forward. The government has provided capacity support and has invited those leaders and other indigenous organizations to make formal submissions of their ideas. Ongoing engagement to discuss the government of Alberta's proposals and to further understand the indigenous communities' perspectives on implementing the principles and objectives of the UN declaration have commenced and will be a major part of this initiative going forward.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Minister.

Now, last month the Premier, the grand chief of Treaty 8, the Minister of Indigenous Relations, and the deputy grand chief of Treaty 8 signed a protocol agreement to reaffirm a government-to-government relationship and to establish engagement tables in the near future to address Treaty 8 priorities. Are you looking to sign similar agreements with the other treaty organizations, and would this be reflected in the budget?

Mr. Feehan: Yes. The department is working with both the Treaty 6 organization and the Treaty 7 organization. As I mentioned a bit earlier, Treaty 7 is making a decision to change the structure

internally. The Blackfoot Confederacy is moving away from the treaty organization. As such, we are making the adjustment to work with two groups within the Treaty 7 organization, and the protocol agreements are moving forward. In fact, we are hoping that the agreement with the Blackfoot Confederacy will be something that we accomplish before the summer comes, hopefully, having an opportunity to sign a similar agreement.

We believe that signing the protocol agreements will open the door to more substantive discussions between every single ministry and the indigenous population, so we're really looking forward to it. Signing these agreements and our apology to the residential school survivors, our support for a national inquiry on missing and murdered women, and our commitment to implementing the principles of the United Nations declaration show that we're making good on our promise to fundamentally transform our relationship with the indigenous people. We have set aside funds within the department budget for this purpose.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Minister.

Finally, on this topic – and you referred to it, but I'll ask it anyway – in what ways are you addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report and recommendations, and how does the budget reflect that part of it?

Mr. Feehan: Well, as you know, one of the very first acts Premier Rachel Notley took was to apologize for the province's inaction regarding the federal residential school system in this province, and she also called for a national inquiry on murdered and missing indigenous women, which were both calls for action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, by the way.

You may know that back in February I attended the second round-table on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, where the province of Alberta is taking the lead on the socioeconomic action plan for indigenous women across the province. Tracy Balash and her group are doing great work in terms of designing that piece, working with all the provinces across the country and pushing it forward.

The ministries were asked, as well as looking at the United Nations declaration, to also look at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations, so all of that was included. In fact, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had as one of their action plans the adoption of the United Nations declaration. They are very neatly tied together, and they are all moving forward. That's reflected in the same budget line items as the United Nations declaration, the \$1 million that was put forward through Rachel Notley's directive.

Ms Woollard: Thank you very much.

I'll hand it over.

Mr. Rosendahl: Minister, respectful dialogue with Alberta's indigenous people is fundamental to the process of renewing and developing strong relationships. As you and I know, there have been huge issues in West Yellowhead on this matter. Anyway, the performance indicators present a clear picture as to why respectful and strong relationships are needed. Can the minister speak to how the funds allocated under the operating expense for First Nations and Métis relations as per line 2 on page 154 of the government estimates support indigenous people?

Mr. Feehan: Thank you for the question. The First Nations and Métis relationship builds government-to-government and community-based relations with the First Nations, the Métis Settlements General Council, and the Métis Nation of Alberta Association. Our First Nation and Métis relationship unit works

with all of these people. In its work the First Nations and Métis relationship fulfills this engagement between the government and Alberta indigenous governments, organizations, northern communities, and individuals and provides advice on policies, priorities, and programs affecting them. It also works with willing First Nations and Métis communities and other partners to strengthen indigenous participation in Alberta's social and economic landscape.

The division facilitates economic partnerships, administers the First Nations development fund, which we had a chance to speak a little bit about today, but I'm happy to answer more about that. The Métis settlements legislation provides for the 2013 flood recovery efforts that affected First Nations. First Nations and Métis relations also work to share knowledge and information about indigenous people's histories, cultures, and modern aspirations.

Let me just talk about budget numbers for a second now. The breakdown for the budget is that there is about \$20 million in grants provided to indigenous communities to help them with a variety of projects, some of which I listed a little bit earlier. I must tell you that as I go to each of the communities that I promised to go to – and we have been fulfilling that promise – we are just continually joyful to see the progress that has been made in communities from building businesses and moving things forward to developing the communities in ways that are very future thinking and hopeful for the children of the future.

There is \$6.9 million in salaries and benefits for 58 employees – that includes three staff in our strategic directions – and \$1.3 million for legal, community engagement, policy review, and systems support contracts as well as travel, office equipment, telecommunications, and general office supplies.

Mr. Rosendahl: Okay. Thank you.

As a supplement to that question, line 2 on page 154 of government estimates indicates an increase of \$279,000 in operating expenses for First Nations and Métis relations compared to Budget 2015-16. Can you discuss the purpose of this increased funding?

Mr. Feehan: Great. Yeah, sure. There is an increase of \$1 million from 2015-16 to 2016-17 to support the First Nations engagement tables, that we've talked about a number of times here in terms of our protocol agreements, and the implementation of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations. The increase is offset somewhat by a decrease of half a million dollars – actually, it's about \$481,000 – from 2015-16 to 2016-17 due to the government of Canada funding provided under the Canada-Alberta jobs fund agreement, which I mentioned as being shifted over.

There is also a \$0.2 million due to that 2 per cent budget reduction that this government has done across the board just to provide some restraint in government services.

Mr. Rosendahl: Okay. Thank you very much.

I'll turn it over to you now.

Ms Woollard: All right. Outcome 1 on page 81 of the ministry business plan indicates a commitment to support indigenous communities so they can fully participate in the social and economic opportunities that all Albertans take part in. From a household income standpoint performance indicators 1(d), 1(f), and 1(g) clearly illustrate that indigenous people are likely to earn less employment income and have lower postsecondary education completion rates. What steps has the ministry taken to rectify these issues, and how are these initiatives supported in the budget?

Mr. Feehan: Well, as you know, I've been a social worker in this province for approximately 35 years and have worked with indigenous communities. One of the things that we just know is a truism in this province is that indigenous communities are overrepresented in problematic areas and underrepresented in areas of success too often. We are absolutely, fundamentally committed to changing that in the future. Moving forward, we're going to work very hard to look at those performance indicators and move the ball down the field because it is ultimately important for the children of the next generation.

This ministry provides grants to the indigenous communities and organizations directed at connecting indigenous people to training and employment and to support community-owned business development. Last year there was over \$7 million provided in grants toward these kinds of objectives.

11:00

The ministry participates in initiatives designed to improve educational outcomes as well. You may know that we signed the Kee Tas Kee Now agreement with the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council to provide wraparound educational services, that I'm sure you're concerned about as a teacher of many years, working in some of the very schools, in fact, that are covered in that Kee Tas Kee Now agreement. We also, of course, have the memorandum of understanding on First Nations education that has been created with the Ministry of Education and three organizations representing treaties 6, 7, and 8. The federal government is directed at improving educational attainment for First Nations students as well.

Ms Woollard: That's such an important area. Thank you, Minister.

This is along with that same question. What is the ministry doing to increase the economic participation of indigenous people, and how is this reflected in the budget?

Mr. Feehan: We are very happy to say that this is an area of success in the indigenous communities. They are working with us very closely to enhance their own economic participation in the province of Alberta, not living separately on reserves apart from Alberta but . . .

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.
We'll now go to the Official Opposition.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Getting back to the key strategies in the second bullet, I have a couple of questions with this one. In what ways will you be supporting the implementation of the memorandum of understanding for First Nations education in Alberta? The reason I ask this is because the MOU was agreed upon with First Nations, but there's no reference to Métis settlements and their MNA, Métis Nation of Alberta Association, framework agreement. Also, the MOU states that the government and First Nations will implement in accordance with the 2008 protocol agreement. However, a new agreement has been made with Treaty 8, so will this government be working on another draft of the MOU after renewing protocol agreements with treaties 6 and 7 and now the Métis Nation of Alberta Association?

Mr. Feehan: No. They won't be doing a new MOU. You may know, of course, that the MOU comes not from our ministry but from the Ministry of Education, and that is the arrangement that's there. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education is a top priority, of course, for us, and we dedicated, as a result, \$74.8 million through the Ministry of Education. That wouldn't be reflected, of course, in my budget here, but we are working with them. I was part of the signing of the Kee Tas Kee Now agreement, for example, and have

met with the federal minister along with our Minister of Education, so we are working together in that tripartite way to do that.

The targeted investments that we have over the next little while are to strengthen the relationship between the provincial schools and the First Nations schools, as we talked about earlier. We don't want a difference between the type of education, the level of education, and the quality of education on and off the reserves. We can't take responsibility to actually pay for the schools – that is a federal responsibility – but we can do all of the wraparound services. We won't actually take on the job of building the schools or paying the teachers. We can do almost everything else.

Mr. Hanson: I think that's very important because it is an issue. I can give as an example the Goodfish First Nation. They bus their kids down to Ashmont specifically because a lot of times they don't feel that the level of education is the same.

Mr. Feehan: That's true, and that happens across the province, but I've also learned that some communities now are starting to ship children from off-reserve to on-reserve because the quality of education is starting to improve. It's not just about the subject matter but the way in which they're engaging the students and enhancing the feeling that education is a tool for them to be successful in life. I can tell you that some of the chiefs out there have made it abundantly clear to me that education is their number one priority, and they are working very closely with us on it.

Mr. Hanson: I'm hearing the same thing, and it's quite encouraging that in some cases they're including a lot of the elders in the education system of their kids, and it's really, really been helpful.

Okay. In regard to the First Nations development fund are there any transparency and accountability measures in place to ensure that decisions are made free of political considerations?

Mr. Feehan: Well, the question, I guess, perhaps is: you know, do I as the political person in the ministry have influence over which contracts are fulfilled or which ones are not? The answer is no. I do of course sign off on them because I have a fiduciary responsibility and have to sign those cheques, not the cheque itself, of course, but the memo to allow that to happen.

There is an internal process within the ministry, and I had a chance, actually, to go over to the ministry and meet with the team that makes those decisions and sit down with them and have them walk through a little bit of the process. It's a fairly comprehensive process, that has them put out a request for proposals, receive all of them. They don't just simply, you know, pick and send out a cheque for some of them. They actually work with the communities on proposals. So if they get a proposal that they think is kind of there but not quite there, they'll go back and say, "You know, we can't fund this, but if you were to put some more energy into this piece and that piece," and actually work along.

Then, of course, we have a very comprehensive internal audit team that goes back and does a review not only of, "Was the money sent out, and was it spent on the appropriate things?" but they actually look at the question of: did we get value for our dollars as well?

Mr. Hanson: Exactly. I'd just like to have confidence that the money is being put in where it can be best utilized and for the best benefit of all of Alberta First Nations and communities.

Mr. Feehan: As you can imagine, that really is a joint responsibility of the communities and us as well. We want to make sure that the dollars that we supply are well spent, but we don't want

to tell communities what they have to spend their dollars on because that never works.

Mr. Hanson: They know best. They do. Okay. Thank you, Minister.

The fifth bullet. One example of those we know to be collaborating with the government and First Nations – this is in the key strategies as well – would be proponents in the oil field. Can you give us other examples of private and/or nonprofit sectors that you would be collaborating with?

Mr. Feehan: Well, I can tell you that, you know, the industry partners – all of the oil industries, forestry, and so on – are a very fundamental part of the work that we do with the communities. I myself have had the opportunity to meet with five of the major oil companies: Cenovus, ConocoPhillips, Teck, CNRL – I know I've just said four, but there are five – and Syncrude.

Mr. Hanson: Soon to be Suncor.

Mr. Feehan: We work with all of them to make sure that they are working well with the indigenous communities. I can tell you that many of them have very forward-looking programs. Sometimes, you know, I listen to what they have to tell me because they are there on the front lines, actually working with the communities, and they often have insights for me. I've found that very helpful. I was surprised at how many CEOs of these corporations came to meet me rather than just sending their government relations kinds of people.

Mr. Hanson: That's encouraging. I guess one of the reasons I asked that question is that, you know, within the last year there was that forestry agreement – I believe it was with the Peavine Métis and a couple of others – that kind of went off the rails. It was only because they hadn't . . .

Mr. Feehan: In that particular case, it was only because the process that occurred on the Métis settlement didn't follow the rules outlined by the long-term agreement. It wasn't that there was a problem with the relationship between the Métis settlement and the business partners.

Mr. Hanson: Exactly. No.

Mr. Feehan: So one of the things . . .

Mr. Hanson: That's what I'm kind of going toward, making sure they know what protocols they have to follow and rules they have to follow to make sure that these agreements are successful.

Mr. Feehan: Right. And because we have responsibility, we had to go back and say: we need to make sure that the rules are followed so that there's good governance here, not just a business arrangement, and that the citizens on the settlement also . . .

Mr. Hanson: That the best interests of the citizens are met, yes.

Mr. Feehan: . . . were treated with respect.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you very much.

Again to key strategies. In what way is the government establishing and working with First Nations Women's Economic Security Council and Métis Women's Economic Security Council to address social and economic needs of aboriginal women in Alberta?

11:10

Mr. Feehan: Well, I'm very happy to say that we have, as you mentioned, the two councils, and we every year appoint a number

of women, that are recommended to us from around the province, to those councils. We do have representation from around the province on them for both the Métis and the First Nations one. As a result, we sit down with the councils, and they sit down and they create a large number of recommendations to help us make changes; the I am a good man program, for example, to decrease violence in the indigenous communities, which has actually, by the way, been adopted by and even been brought into some of the jails. We've had very good feedback on some of those pieces and how they've changed things.

Mr. Hanson: I have heard good things about that program.

Mr. Feehan: Of course, they have a variety of other recommendations as well. From each of those we take the recommendations that are created by the indigenous community, bring them back, and then determine which of the ministries may be able to take action on this and begin to proceed forward with that.

Mr. Hanson: The people that are on these councils: are they nominated from within their communities, or are they picked by . . .

Mr. Feehan: Communities are always encouraged to bring people forward for nomination to this committee. In fact, one of the things that we've been doing in the last number of months is asking every community we go to to think about not only these two committees but every single agency, board, and commission that we have in the government. As you know, we're doing a review government-wide on the ABCs, and we have gone to each of the settlements and each of the reserves and all the treaty organizations and said: we would like recommendations . . .

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Yes. We'll now move on to the member from the third party.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister. Let's face it folks. We have a number of very serious issues to deal with in the province, let alone in the ministry. One of those that I'm really glad that we're seeing a lot of all-party co-operation on is the fentanyl crisis. I would like to focus, if we could, on how it affects our First Nations friends, especially now. Given that substance abuse – and this is hearkening back to terrible memories from my time as AADAC chair and wellness minister. But we did not have fentanyl at that time. In the last two budgets from your government – now, maybe I'm missing something; tell me if I am – it appears that neither your department's business plan nor Health's business plan mentions strategies to address the concern for this killer on our reserves.

Mr. Feehan: Well, as you know, we've been working really closely with a number of indigenous organizations around the fentanyl issue. With the Blood Tribe particularly, where it was identified as a primary thing, we actually developed a model of working with the community that is starting to spread throughout the province because it has been very effective in many ways. Unfortunately, the fentanyl crisis is a tragedy of great proportions, and we're concerned about it spreading around the province.

The Health department has made a number of adjustments and changes to how they react to fentanyl. Of course, as you know, they made it possible for naloxone to be available without prescription and have delivered actual naloxone kits all across the province, thousands of them, so that they're available in close proximity to places where people may take them. That includes many of the First Nations communities.

Now, there doesn't need to be a line item in our budget because it really is a Health issue, so you won't see that reflected with us. Where we are involved, of course, is that we are working with our policy branch to continue to work carefully with Health to make sure that things move ahead. We have that role of facilitator and enhancer of the co-ordination between the First Nations community and Health. Health themselves are doing work to make sure that the kits are available, that we have a protocol, that we actually have teams of people who understand the issue taken from the Blood Tribe experience, which was very good, and spread the same across the province. We also have Human Services working closely on recovery issues in terms of enhancement for families that are experiencing problems in this area.

Mr. Rodney: Sure. Minister, I wasn't suggesting a line item in the budget per se, neither yours nor Health's, with respect to this, but I'm hoping for – maybe it's on a go-forward basis – at least a line in the business plan to say that it's a priority.

Speaking of line items, is there a line item anywhere for collaboration on addictions treatment between you and Health?

Mr. Feehan: Well, we don't put a separate line item for every single ministry. We have a line item for the unit that covers all of the collaboration across the government ministries. That's reflected there in line 2 for every single ministry, and that would include Health as well as Education.

Mr. Rodney: I just wonder if at some point it might be worthy of discussion within the department. Do we put a price on it? A lot of people out there, if there's no money attached to it, wonder if it is indeed a priority.

Let's go on to the next part.

Mr. Feehan: What you'll be looking for, of course, is a line item in other ministries later on as opposed to our ministry for that.

Mr. Rodney: Sure. Yeah, and this is a constantly evolving process, obviously.

Let's think about transportation for a minute. You've referred to – and I've done this many times – going from place to place with our indigenous friends. When you go to some of the more remote indigenous communities, health and social services are a major barrier for a lot of our friends. When we're talking about improved quality of life, can you tell us what expense line items support improved physical access for remote indigenous communities?

Mr. Feehan: Well, again, you know, the answer to this one is very similar to what it was in the last one, that you won't find line items in the Ministry of Indigenous Relations that are related specifically to programs that are directed by other ministries. In the previous question you asked about a Health question, so I want you to go back and ask the Health minister about how that's reflected in their budget. In this case I would say to you that the Transportation minister is the person who would be asked that appropriate question. Our First Nations and Métis relations, of course, is the team that helps to co-ordinate all of that and set up the protocol tables where they'll actually have direct access to the ministers, but the line item will be reflected in terms of the actual program in Transportation.

Mr. Rodney: I get that. Minister, it's a huge job, but I would suggest that if it has to do with Indigenous Relations, maybe not today but on another occasion your staff could dig up that number so that if someone else other than me asks, "What is the number, and where can I find it?" because it relates to indigenous . . .

Mr. Feehan: But it will never be reflected in this budget because we don't actually pave the road.

Mr. Rodney: I know that.

Mr. Feehan: Or we don't pay for the transportation system to . . .

Mr. Rodney: I know that. But when I was in wellness, if it affected a different department, I should know where it comes from out of their budget. That's all I'm saying.

Let's go to page 46 of the capital plan. It mentions that it'll support housing for First Nations, yet there's not a specific dollar amount commitment nor a specific number of individuals. So I guess the question is: how much new housing will Alberta First Nations see? Where is that going to be located? When do you expect any kind of completion date? Just some details on that.

Mr. Feehan: The issue of housing, of course, is one where we have a federal-provincial kind of separation going on, and housing on-reserve is primarily funded by the federal government.

Mr. Rodney: Sure.

Mr. Feehan: It's not a responsibility of our government, so I'm not going around building homes.

Mr. Rodney: No, but I have heard what you said about not caring whether they're Canadians; they're Albertans, too.

Mr. Feehan: We absolutely are concerned. So there are a number of areas in which we actually have some concerns and so on. One of them is, of course, for example, the flood recoveries from the June floods. In that situation we have, as you know, forwarded a hundred per cent of the money. You can see it reflected in the budget under line 8. We have forwarded all of that money.

Over time, of course, we will take those dollars that were spent and gather those receipts and submit that to the federal government for reimbursement and do that process but, following the principle of pay first, ask the federal government for the money later. We won't recover that money for about five years.

Mr. Rodney: Oh, believe me; having been through the floods and fires before, I know that.

Mr. Feehan: You know that. We also have, of course, under the LTA a specific amount of money that's allotted for housing supports there, and there's also a relationship with Habitat for Humanity to build houses in some of the communities, and we're working closely. I've met with the Habitat for Humanity people and the communities in which those houses are being built.

I just want to say that the capital plan includes \$892 million to build more affordable housing and renew existing housing, resulting in more people moving off waiting lists and into safe and affordable homes. The plan will also include support housing for First Nations.

Mr. Rodney: That will be off-reserve, right, Minister? Off-reserve, correct?

Mr. Feehan: Off-reserve, yes.

11:20

Mr. Rodney: Okay. Well, let's go to performance measures 1(a) and 1(b) and performance indicators 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), et cetera. I know that this is not your budget, but I'm wondering if either now or on another occasion perhaps you or one of your support staff – how much of the Infrastructure budget will support First Nations

development in general, not just what you mentioned about housing but anything else related to that? So Infrastructure spending on First Nations. I mean, it could include things like Maskwa house at the U of A, et cetera. Where this is coming from, folks, is just: how much money are we putting where our mouth is on infrastructure for First Nations?

Mr. Feehan: I understand the question, but I can't give you a different answer because you've switched from Health to Transportation, and now you've switched to . . .

Mr. Rodney: Because they're all connected.

Mr. Feehan: Well, they're not going to be reflected in the budget of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Rodney: I understand that.

Mr. Feehan: We don't do those projects.

Mr. Rodney: Right.

Mr. Feehan: What we do is work with . . .

Mr. Rodney: But somebody in your office must know.

Mr. Feehan: Well, what we do is spend our money on the resources that we need to ensure that there is a direct communication between each of the ministries and each of the communities involved.

Mr. Rodney: Right. That's what I'm talking about.

Mr. Feehan: But it's a facilitation role. We won't build Maskwa house. Infrastructure will build Maskwa house, right?

Mr. Rodney: I know that. Believe me, I know. Yeah.

Mr. Feehan: We don't have a responsibility to go to other ministries and ask them to tell us exactly how much they're spending on indigenous people.

Mr. Rodney: I thought you do that.

Mr. Feehan: It's not a policing role.

Mr. Rodney: No, it's not.

Mr. Feehan: It's a relationship role.

Mr. Rodney: It's an information and communication role.

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

We will now move on to the private members of the government caucus.

Ms Woollard: Okay. Thank you. At the risk of repeating myself, Minister, I'd like to ask the question that I ended on last time, just to get more information if possible. What is the ministry doing to increase the economic participation of indigenous people, and how is this reflected in the budget? We started on that, but would you mind elaborating?

Mr. Feehan: Well, yeah. Thank you. That's good. We kind of got cut off a little bit there. I think that there are lots of things that are really important for us to talk about, and one of the things I'd really like to highlight is the fact that we have three particular programs that are directed toward indigenous peoples' involvement in the business community. We have the aboriginal economic partnership program, the employment partnerships program, and the indigenous

business investment fund. Indigenous Relations supported approximately a hundred grants in 2015 and '16 through these programs to enhance indigenous participation in the economy. In 2016 and '17 the allocation under the employment partnership program will be \$1.8 million for the employment projects. Indigenous Relations also provides funding through the aboriginal economic partnership program and the aboriginal business investment fund for economic development.

I will give you a couple of examples, just so you have a bit of a sense of grants that were provided. For example, there was a \$200,000 grant to Trade Winds to Success to support indigenous apprentices in Edmonton and Calgary. I had an opportunity to meet with the woman who's responsible for that program. You were at the same event that I was.

Ms Woollard: Yes.

Mr. Feehan: In fact, I met with her at two different events. It's a great program that's working with indigenous women primarily but across the board all apprentices and helping them to do all the work necessary to get themselves ready to be an apprentice and then helping them through the apprenticeship programs, just to give you an example of that.

Let me give you one further example under the aboriginal business investment fund, which provided eight grants worth about \$5 million. Just to give you one example, \$700,000 was added to the Alberta Indian Investment Corporation, which supports access for indigenous entrepreneurs for development of loans for their new and existing businesses. The reason that I want to highlight that is because we're actually increasing that fund this year because it has been so successful and so widely used in this province, and it has resulted in significant business development. We're very happy to continue to develop that program.

Ms Woollard: Well, thank you. That is excellent. That's wonderful information.

This next question probably relates to that. It's paragraph 5 on page 80 of the ministry business plan. It highlights the ministry's commitments to collaborate with various stakeholders, which is what you've been talking about, to advance indigenous social and economic circumstances. Can the minister speak to how the ministry is working with other levels of government, other government initiatives, and industry to address concerns?

Mr. Feehan: Indigenous Relations collaborates with the indigenous communities, industry, other ministries, and the government of Alberta to provide funding for indigenous projects in economic development and employment and training. Indigenous Relations is committed to supporting community-driven projects. However, we anticipate that proposals from communities will be similar next year as they are this year, so the budget remains fairly much the same.

In 2015-2016 my ministry supported a variety of community-driven projects to assist indigenous people, including youth, to engage in career choices. For example, \$44,000 was given to the Community Futures Treaty Seven to run a pretrades program, getting people ready to go into the trades, or \$80,000 to the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council to provide a series of youth career camps for several First Nations communities.

We are really proud to partner with the aboriginal capital corporations and organizations in delivering business advisory and entrepreneurial developmental services for individuals. In 2015-16 Indigenous Relations provided support to indigenous entrepreneurs through the Alberta Indian Investment Corporation, Apeetogosan

(Métis) Development Inc., and the Community Futures Treaty Seven. The Indian Investment Corporation and Settlement Investment Corporation provide business development plans and support services for new and expanding businesses throughout the province.

Ms Woollard: Thank you. Excellent.
I'll turn it over to Mr. Rosendahl.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you. I'm going to change it up a little bit, Minister. We all know indigenous women face systemic barriers that are hindering their overall quality of life and well-being. I am proud that the government advocated the federal government to lead the national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women. Can the minister speak to the intergovernmental work being done to ensure Alberta is doing its part to resolve this systemic issue and create safer communities for vulnerable women and whether or not there is support available in the budget to continue these efforts?

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I think this is a very important question because I think, as I mentioned earlier, the focus on working with the indigenous women is definitely increasing for our ministry. We fundamentally believe that if we enhance the well-being of women, it will enhance the community. The connection between the two is absolutely direct. Of course, we think that's also very importantly connected to the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women. If women have the opportunity to be successful and have the supports to be successful, then we would hope to be able to diminish and, hopefully, even someday completely stop the incidents of murdered and missing women.

We work together with the provincial, territorial, and federal governments on this issue. As you know, I was at the second round-table on murdered and missing indigenous women in Winnipeg and had an opportunity there to speak to the economic action plan that is being put together by our women's initiative group on behalf of the nation to move forward. That plan is working on a number of different areas, including education, health care, community, and entrepreneurship. We expect that with the adoption of that socioeconomic action plan by the national organizations, both the NGOs and the government, we'll be able to really push forward and make some major changes for indigenous women over the next number of years.

Mr. Rosendahl: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

Also on the topic of indigenous women, Minister, performance indicator 1(e) on page 83 of the ministry business plan shows that indigenous women 15 years and over who work full-time earn almost \$19,000 less than their male counterparts. Given the ministry's commitment to improve socioeconomic outcomes for indigenous women, as indicated by key strategy 1.3 on page 82 of the ministry business plan, how does Budget 2016 support those efforts?

11:30

Mr. Feehan: Right. Well, I'll just direct you to the monies first, and then I'll speak a bit more about it. In 2016-17 there is \$225,000 in additional funding to support our ongoing efforts to improve socioeconomic outcomes for indigenous women, and that includes \$100,000 in annual core funding to support the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women. Many people know them through the Esquao awards. They've been around for 25 years now and have never received core funding from this provincial government ever. They've only received program funding, and we decided it's time to change that. It's a fundamental difference that we have committed to.

The other \$125,000 will support community-based initiatives developed in consultation with indigenous women. You know that we have the two security councils, the First Nations council and the Métis council, and we're working closely with both of them to make sure that we have that.

We also have a very close relationship with businesswomen throughout the province who have come together – I had a great opportunity to be with them – and foreign dignitaries coming from Africa and had them meet together, where they could learn from each other and begin to develop business relationships. We're absolutely committed to their success, not only here in the province but throughout the world.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you.

Line 3 on page 154 of the government estimates indicates almost \$1.26 million in funding for indigenous women's initiatives and research. This represents a 21.8 per cent increase compared to Budget 2015-16 and a 61 per cent increase compared to 2014-15. Minister, can you elaborate on the work completed by the indigenous women's initiative and research and how it supports indigenous women?

Mr. Feehan: Well, I hope this does reflect our absolute determination to increase our work with indigenous women and make sure that they are part of the great success of this province. We are coming out of a bad time in . . .

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We'll now move on to the members from the Official Opposition.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you. We'll go back and forth for the full 10, please.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Hanson: Thanks. Minister, I know that as government we tend to meet, you know, strictly with other levels of government unless we get into a situation like we did with Bill 6 and the consultation and the town halls. I've been approached on a number of occasions by elders who say: "You know, we'd like to have some input, not just when you come out and meet with the chief and council. The communities would like that." Do you think it would be acceptable to the First Nations and Métis councils and chiefs to do something like that on the First Nations reserves, where we would come out and have discussions with the whole community, with elders as well? Do you think that would be something that would work?

Mr. Feehan: Let me assure you that we always include elders whenever we go and meet, so the elders are there. I also can tell you that I frequently get letters or phone calls or requests for meetings at my office, and I accommodate absolutely as many of them as I can physically fit into my schedule. My staff will tell you that I really like talking to people. I am a social worker of 35 years, and I think the only way for me to learn about what's really going on is to have direct, face-to-face conversations.

That's part of my commitment of going out to the communities as well. When I go out to the communities, I want to speak to people, and I am more than happy to speak not only to the chief and council but to other people who come and meet me. Sometimes people know that the chief and council are there. They come and they sit in on the meeting, or they catch me in the waiting room, and they ask me questions and so on. I would like to absolutely make a clear statement right now that I am prepared to have conversations whenever possible with anybody who will help me to learn and to teach me about what needs to happen in their community.

Mr. Hanson: I understand that protocols are very important, and they can be quite different from one area of the province to another. I guess my question was more around: is that something that's acceptable, I think, to the different chiefs and councils, you know, just kind of on a basis where you'd go out and meet with the whole community and discuss with them?

Mr. Feehan: If you're looking for a simple answer, yes, absolutely, if people want to invite me out to the community. I can assure you that I am being teased about being on the pow-wow trail this summer, and I will be there.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. They're quite enjoyable. I like going out there.

Mr. Feehan: They are. I've been to many in my own life, before I became the minister, over my career and enjoyed them, and I will continue to go to them, where everyday folks gather.

Mr. Hanson: Perfect. Thank you.

Okay. We're going to go on to performance measures, a couple of questions there. Under performance measure 1(a) could you just elaborate on where some of the building projects are located, give me a percentage of how many would be on-reserve versus off-reserve? Are there any other employment initiatives in the works for indigenous people, and what might those be?

Mr. Feehan: Let me just give a quick review here. A lot of the line item that you're referring to refers to the aboriginal economic partnership program. I can give you many examples. As noted before, there are literally hundreds of these programs, so I wouldn't want to use all your time citing them all.

Mr. Hanson: I'd appreciate that. We're running close.

Mr. Feehan: But I can give you an example of things like \$25,000 given to the Sawridge First Nation, the partnership program in collaboration with the Slave Lake regional tri-council communities, which is the town of Slave Lake and the MD of Lesser Slave River, or that the Yellowhead Tribal Development Foundation received \$25,000 for a summit that will bring the four YTD member nations together for a shared long-term vision on economic development.

Mr. Hanson: I do get asked the question, you know, from different areas about what's been allotted to our nation or our settlement or whatever. If I could have that just so I could have the answers for the future, that would be great.

Mr. Feehan: You know, I will take the request and make sure that the department has information available for you.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, sir.

Okay. Key strategy 2.1. There are still many ongoing issues between First Nations and Métis settlements and the aboriginal consultation office. Is it the government's hope, at least in part, that developing the consultation area maps through the geodata mapping project and consultation policies – are they all expected to be complete by 2018-19, and will that put an end to some of these issues?

Mr. Feehan: Well, right now 47 of the 48 nations have a consultation area map, so we're very close to completion on that. The maps are also updated, by the way, and solidified by experience. I think that's an important thing to note here. The ministry has an ambitious goal of raising the percentage from zero, in terms of the number of areas covered, in 2014-15 to 33 per cent,

moving that up to 66 per cent by next year and to 100 per cent by 2018-19. So we're definitely moving ahead on that.

Mr. Hanson: Super.

How much will the project cost the Alberta government, and will the funds be strictly coming out of your budget?

Mr. Feehan: For the geodata mapping project?

Mr. Hanson: Yeah.

Mr. Feehan: It does come out of our budget completely. I'll have to look at which line item.

It will be under the aboriginal consultation office here. It'll be 6.2, the aboriginal consultation office, that is responsible for this. If you need a more particular number, we could definitely get back to you.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. That would be fine. Thank you.

Under key strategy 2.1 is there an expected completion date for the nonsettlement Métis consultation policy?

Mr. Feehan: Again, not a particular date. The reason why is because there are some difficulties in this one. We have initiated a process with the Métis Nation of Alberta Association to work with us on this. Meetings have occurred already, including with me at the ministerial level, but of course the technicians' level has been working pretty hard on this for a while.

The difficulty will be that there is no one single entity that represents 100 per cent of the Métis in the province. The association, as you know, is a voluntary association and probably now has about 50 per cent of the Métis population signed up, so we will work closely with them. Ever since the Daniels case they tell me that that percentage is increasing dramatically.

Mr. Hanson: I bet it would be.

Mr. Feehan: We're hopeful that they will work with us. We made offers to establish zone-by-zone work to try to move things forward and then use that learning in that zone, starting with zone 1, the Wood Buffalo area of the Métis, to look at how we can have them represent . . .

Mr. Hanson: It's not easy to make something work for all areas.

Mr. Feehan: No.

Mr. Hanson: I think we've covered that a couple of times.

Mr. Feehan: Right.

Mr. Hanson: Anyway, just moving on, because I'm running out of time here, to reserve water/waste-water infrastructure, in what ways is the province helping First Nations end long-term water advisories?

11:40

Mr. Feehan: Again, this is a difficult area for us because of the federal-provincial split.

Mr. Hanson: What I'm saying – and we've had the discussion, I think, a couple of times today – is that people don't want to hear that, right?

Mr. Feehan: I know.

Mr. Hanson: They want to hear what we are doing together to get this done.

Mr. Feehan: It's very difficult. You know, we literally have some situations where we're working with a municipality to bring the waterline right up to the edge of the reserve, and then we have to say to the feds: the pipe is there; it's just got a cork in the end.

Mr. Hanson: I know. We need to work through that.

Mr. Feehan: We do. But, you know, we did note the promise of the federal government to make sure that there's a resolution to the water issue so that there would be no boil-water advisories, which, as a way of measuring, would be a reasonable starting place, but I think it's bigger than that. I think we need to make sure that the reserves have appropriate access to water and waste treatment and not just simply the minimum of: don't drink the water.

Mr. Hanson: I guess the second part to that question is: in what way is the province helping these communities face challenges in adequately managing garbage and waste on the reserves?

Mr. Feehan: We work with the communities around particular projects. One of the ways that we enhance their ability to deal with it on their own, of course, is through our mini business development programs. A lot of the reserves are establishing their own business that handles those kinds of issues, so we help them to set that up. One of the advantages of doing it that way, of course, is that that business can then also act to provide services off-reserve, so it becomes an income source, potentially, in the future.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you again.

When women and children are fleeing violence and have a safe place to live, they can make better decisions for their future and change the course of their lives and their children's lives. The federal government has committed \$10.4 million over the next three years to help renovate and construct new shelters for the victims in First Nations communities. With Alberta having one of the largest . . .

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: With that, Minister, I just say hay-hay.

The Chair: We'll move on to the member from the third party.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister. We're getting close here, but I have so many more questions. I'll do as many as we can in the time that we have.

I'm referring to pages 79 and 80 of the business plan and timelines. Minister, I don't know how many First Nations individuals and groups you've consulted with after finalizing the budget, and that's not the most important thing. But I would be curious to know: what suggestions or input have you received in your consultations – formal, informal, individual groups – that the ministry just doesn't have the financial capacity to have the authority to implement this year, and where is this coming from? I would hate to think that you've had great ideas come to you and that you just don't have the money to do it. Can you comment on that?

Mr. Feehan: Well, you know, there are always going to be ideas and thoughts that are brought forward to the ministry that we aren't able to act on right away, but we do keep track of them very carefully and work with the communities. Sometimes the problem is that the idea is at such a rough, beginning stage that it really requires some work to actually form it into a particular business plan or a move-forward sort of project. So we work very carefully – nothing falls off the table.

Part of the advantage of having the protocol agreement signed is that those tables are ongoing. It's not an issue, you know, where you get one shot at the minister once every two years and you have to bring things forward. Instead, there'll be ongoing, regular consultation. So if the indigenous communities have a priority, they can set that priority at the table, and they can follow up on that priority on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Rodney: It's great to hear that you'll have that ongoing priority because – let's face it – a lot of things have a germination stage, and they need to incubate for a while before there's a set of options. After that, there could be one chosen and an action plan that's evaluated and so on. I get that: it's ongoing. We want to have the talk, we want to have the relationship, but we all want the action, and when I say we, I don't mean us as legislators or people who don't happen to be indigenous. Our indigenous friends tell me that as well.

Speaking of that, the Indigenous Relations business plan doesn't appear – I use that word “appear” – to recognize the potential of indigenous entrepreneurship in our province. There are a lot of innovators and business owners and tourism operators that I've spoken with as well. Some might be harsh and ask a question like: why does your business plan not envision a place for Alberta's indigenous peoples within Alberta's diversifying economic fabric? Please tell me that that's not the case and that there is a place and it's identified somewhere when it comes to entrepreneurship and diversification, because – wow – some of these folks are the most entrepreneurial, diversifying folks I've ever met.

Mr. Feehan: Well, as you've heard me say many times this morning, we have at least three programs that work specifically with businesses to develop plans and to actually put them into action and actually build functional businesses. And as I've mentioned, as I move around the province, we are seeing some fantastic programs all around the province, whether they're working on alternative energies, whether they're working on providing basic services like groceries for their communities or improving roads and so on or building gas stations to serve not only their own community but the larger community. A lot of that is reflected in our business plan on page 82, under 1(a). You'll notice it says that there are economic initiatives and that the number of indigenous strategic economic development initiatives, partnerships and capacity building projects for the last number of years is around 40. So we are doing that consistently, year on year, from 2014 right through to '16, '17, and '18.

Mr. Rodney: Let's hope that number just keeps going up and up. I just wonder if sometimes it's a communication thing. Again, not blaming you or your department – we've got all kinds of partners out there – but I think if more people knew, they would access, you know, and harness tourism, business, and other kinds of innovation.

We're almost out of time . . .

Mr. Feehan: One of the things I want you to really be aware of, though, is that we have an incubation role here. We start businesses; we help get things going. I happened to be on O'Chiese a few weeks ago and looked at them. They have developed their own business centre now. Because they've been successful with some of the businesses we supported them with, they don't come back to us for every single business now.

Mr. Rodney: No, of course not. It's a multiplier effect.

Mr. Feehan: Exactly. So we're seeing vast projects going on. They have six major businesses on O'Chiese, including tourism and other pieces, that they're using to service not only their own community but all of the communities around them, including Rocky Mountain House.

Mr. Rodney: Let's hope it keeps multiplying.

Before I'm out of time, though, I really want to get to page 80, where there's the commitment to acts of reconciliation to help reverse the negative effects of the legacy of residential schools in Alberta. We all know that's extremely commendable, invaluable. Can you tell us, Minister, what specific steps your ministry will take, perhaps along with affiliated ministries and agencies, so that there's a fulsome, meaningful set of acts of reconciliation that have long-term, sustainable impact? I'm sorry; but it's budget estimates so I have to add this: is there a breakout of a timeline and costs that we budget, where we do put our money where our mouth is so that this actually does occur?

Mr. Feehan: Well, our First Nations and Métis relationship group is responsible for working with all of the communities, and clearly one of the priorities that they have is working on the issues of reconciliation. You know that our province started by apologizing for the lack of action on residential schools for many years. We have also met with individuals from the community who have talked about the '60s scoop. We've talked about other kinds of projects that are moving forward, and we're gathering all of those pieces together and looking at how we can deal with them.

We have two sets of responsibilities within this particular ministry. One of them is, of course, to engage in particular acts that are going to help us with reconciliation, whether that be having meetings or gatherings where people can talk about their experiences and working on that. The other piece is that we have to work with every single ministry to make sure that true reconciliation isn't about saying I'm sorry; it's about doing something differently.

Mr. Rodney: Bingo.

Mr. Feehan: So one of the things that we do is make sure that each ministry along the way has the opportunity to look at: how could the services from our ministry be better provided to the indigenous community?

Mr. Rodney: Right.

Mr. Feehan: The Kee Tas Kee Now agreement in education is a fine example of that, where they said to us: we need to actually have some influence on how our children are taught.

Mr. Rodney: Right.

Let's go on to page 80, then, of the business plan: "Indigenous peoples are underrepresented in Alberta's economy" – because this is about going forward, and this is powerful – "and are seeking greater participation in resource and economic development." I hope I have time to read this into the record. Given the government's focus elsewhere in its budget and policies on its climate leadership plan as the forefront of responsible development and economic diversification in this province, it's curious that there's no mention of the role of indigenous Albertans with respect to the climate leadership plan in your ministry's business plan. Hopefully, you have time to give us an answer on that.

Mr. Feehan: Well, as you may know, the climate leadership plan was developed in consultation with indigenous communities while

it was being developed. There are specific dollars set aside within the climate leadership plan, in terms of the carbon levy that's coming forward next year, for them to apply to specifically address the issues of climate change within their own communities, both remediation of climate issues that are going on and the development of businesses that will enhance solar, wind, biomass. All of those are being considered. I know that when I was up at Horse Lake talking with them, they're working very closely with Grande Prairie Regional College to develop a biomass energy system that will be working on the reserve in time. Those are the kinds of things that we'll be working with. We're working closely with the Alberta climate change office to engage all of the indigenous communities, making sure they're involved.

11:50

As I mentioned earlier, I remind the community that while specific money is available for First Nations people to work on climate leadership pieces, they are also eligible to receive funds from all of the other programs and services that all Albertans are eligible for. So they are involved in every possible way, specifically and generally. We expect them to be leaders in this area. We're very much looking forward to it. You know, when I was down at Montana Band, they already have solar panels on most of their public buildings, and that was done through one of our programs, one of our business development programs, and they're expanding that kind of work.

Mr. Rodney: Minister, I want to encourage you on that sort of thing. I don't want to call it best practices. Languages often fail us, especially when we have different cultures talking to each other. Whether it's best practices or whatever the term can be, let's face it: indigenous cultures around the world are facing incredible plights. As I've gone all over the world, it still boggles my mind how similar the problems are from continent to continent, yet there are differences. I've seen such incredible stories of not just surviving but thriving, and I just wonder if it might be possible to not just go across the country and the continent but beyond to find out which are the governments that are working with First Nations or indigenous peoples in the most fair way that allows . . .

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We'll now move on to the private members of the government caucus for the time that's remaining.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you. Minister, on that last question that you were answering, do you have anything further to add to that, or do you want me to re-ask the question?

Mr. Feehan: Please go ahead. Ask the question that you want.

Mr. Rosendahl: Okay. Minister, line 3 on page 154 of government estimates indicates almost \$1.26 million in funding for indigenous women's initiatives and research. This represents a 21.8 per cent increase compared to the budget for 2015-16 and a 61 per cent increase compared to 2014-15. Minister, can you elaborate on the work completed by the indigenous women's initiative and research and how it supports Alberta's indigenous women?

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Thank you for bringing me back to that question. I just want to say that it's a 61 per cent increase, and it needs to be understood in some context. The division was first established in the fall of 2013. There was only one staff member and a small budget to establish women's councils and develop a strategy for the Alberta indigenous internship program. Then in

2014-15 the division received additional staff and funding to support community initiatives.

Since then the division has done the following kinds of initiatives: \$125,000 in grants to friendship centres to adapt and deliver the I Am a Kind Man project, an antiviolence program in the indigenous communities, one that, as I mentioned earlier, has been actually adopted and brought to some of the jails in the province. They also launched the Moose Hide Campaign – you often see me wearing a little square of moose hide – where the men take a stand against family violence. Actually, it's very interesting when you wear that. The reason it's interesting is because it doesn't look like anything in particular, so the number of people that I've had come to me and say to me, "Why are you wearing that?" has really led to some really great conversations. Indeed, you know, even just the smell of the moose hide attracts people because it stands out and draws them in on it.

Also, the women's initiative has launched a web portal for indigenous programs and services. One of the problems was that indigenous people looking on the government website to try to find the things that they wanted found it very difficult, so that was brought together so that there's a single web portal for people to move forward on.

We've also provided \$90,000 in grants to develop leadership and empowerment camps for indigenous girls, so we're specifically focused on young women being successful and helping to move their communities along.

You may know that we provide annual funding for the Esquao awards, which honours women who are successful in the community and who are contributing to their community in a whole variety of ways. It's quite a fabulous event. The people that attend come from all over the province, including our own Lieutenant Governor as well. It's very successful.

We have, for example, put \$20,000 for a literature review on public attitudes towards indigenous women and girls, working with some of the universities in this province to ensure that we look at: what are the barriers to women and girls being successful in terms of our general attitudes in this province, and what are some of the strategies we can use to move beyond the definition of indigenous women and girls that we presently have that allows them to be seen in negative ways and does not enhance the possibility of them being successful in the future?

Finally, we provided a \$50,000 grant to the Hinton Friendship Centre to hire a domestic violence manager to raise awareness about domestic violence, including what community supports are available to assist people impacted by violence.

As you know, in my career as a social worker one of the primary focuses of my career was in the area of family violence, and I am very happy to see us move forward on this. Family violence is one of those issues that doesn't just stop one woman from being successful but stops all of those people with whom she is connected: her children, her partners, her grandchildren. If we stop family violence now, we are actually helping generations of people to have a different life experience.

Recently Cindy Blackstock said: what we're looking for is one generation of indigenous people that does not have to recover from their childhood. I think that's fundamentally important, and that is the primary focus of the work that we want to do when we work with indigenous women and girls.

Thank you.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you very much.

Denise.

Ms Woollard: Wow. Coming after that is hard.

I'll try to make a start on this question and see how far I get. The 2013 southern Alberta floods – we're back to floods – severely impacted Alberta's indigenous communities, particularly the Siksika Nation and the Stoney Nakoda Nation, communities that are still feeling the effects three years later. I was pleased to see that Budget 2016 had allocated approximately \$6.56 million in funding for the 2013 Alberta flooding initiatives as per line 8 on page 154 of government estimates. Can the minister update members of this committee about how these funds will be used in rebuilding efforts and also speak to the progress remaining? I know you've touched on this in other answers.

Mr. Feehan: Well, I'm happy to say that the Stoney Nakoda Nation is very close to finishing up the projects that are there. They did a very good job of having temporary housing and working on the houses, and they will be complete – I am hoping that by the end of this year I can report that we are completely finished in Stoney Nakoda territory.

It's a little bit different in terms of the Siksika Nation. To date nine houses have been constructed, and the families have moved in. Another three are under construction. We expect them to be finished perhaps even by the end of this month. The nation is planning to build 61 houses this year and complete the infrastructure for all of the 124 houses that remain right now. That means that the monies that have been allocated will deplete over the next number of years, and we should see a completion of all of those projects somewhere between 2017 and 2018. We have been successful. We expect to continue to be successful. We're working closely with the Siksika, who have chosen to administer all of their own programs themselves. We had a very wonderful visit down in Siksika territory last week, where we had a chance to go to their fabulous museum, I must say, by the way.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, hon. members. The time allotted for this item of business has now concluded.

I would like to remind everyone that we're scheduled to meet next on May 16 – that's Monday – right here in the Foothills Room to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

Thank you, everyone. The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 12 p.m.]

