



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Third Session

Standing Committee  
on  
Resource Stewardship

Ministry of Indigenous Relations  
Consideration of Main Estimates

Thursday, April 13, 2017  
9 a.m.

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The 29th Legislature  
Third Session**

**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W), Deputy Chair

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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)  
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\* substitution for Wayne Drysdale

**Also in Attendance**

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## **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

### **Participants**

Ministry of Indigenous Relations

Hon. Richard Feehan, Minister

Clay Buchanan, Assistant Deputy Minister, First Nations and Métis Relations

Lorne Harvey, Executive Director and Senior Financial Officer, Finance



9 a.m.

Thursday, April 13, 2017

[Loyola in the chair]

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

**The Chair:** Good morning, everyone. I'd like to call the meeting to order. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018.

I'd ask that we go around the table and have all the MLAs introduce themselves for the record. Minister, when we arrive to you, if you could please introduce the officials that are joining you at the table. I am Rod Loyola, MLA for Edmonton-Ellerslie and the chair of this committee.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm Grant Hunter, the MLA for Cardston-Taber-Warner and the deputy chair.

**Mr. Hanson:** I'm David Hanson, MLA for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. This is my assistant Laila Goodridge.

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm, obviously, the Minister of Indigenous Relations, and I have with me here today Clay Buchanan, who is the assistant deputy minister of First Nations and Métis relations; Donavon Young, who is the deputy minister; and on my right is Lorne Harvey, who is the senior financial officer.

**Ms Kazim:** Good morning. Anam Kazim, MLA for Calgary-Glenmore.

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

**Ms Woollard:** Good morning. Denise Woollard, MLA, Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Good morning. Eric Rosendahl, West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Good morning, everyone. Chris Nielsen, MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

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

**Mr. Dang:** Good morning. Thomas Dang, Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Rodney:** Dave Rodney, MLA, Calgary-Lougheed, and Indigenous Relations advocate for the PC caucus. Welcome.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'd like to note for the record that Mr. Rodney is a substitute for Mr. Drysdale.

Please note that the microphones are operated by Hansard, and the committee proceedings are being audio and video live streamed. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

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) and (7), the rotation for a two-hour meeting 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 50 minutes that follow, 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 will be 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 up to five minutes, once again the minister and a member may combine their speaking times 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 rotations, please feel free to send a note or speak directly with either the chair or committee clerk about the process.

A total of two hours have been scheduled to consider the estimates for the Ministry of Indigenous Relations.

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 the committee's review of estimates.

Ministry officials may be present and at the direction of the minister may address the committee. Ministry officials seated in the gallery, if called upon, have access to a microphone in the gallery area. We have pages available to make deliveries should any notes or other materials need to pass between the gallery and the table. Members' staff may be present and seated along the committee room wall. Space permitting, opposition caucus staff may sit at the table; however, members have priority for seating at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to two 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 11:00 a.m.

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 April 19, 2017.

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 April 19, 2017. 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, including the original, must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. Good morning, everyone. It's a pleasure to be here for the Indigenous Relations spending estimates of 2017-18. Before I begin, I would like to introduce some senior officials from Indigenous Relations. I have Deputy Minister Donavon Young, assistant deputy minister of consultation and land claims Stan Rutwind, assistant deputy minister of First Nations and Métis relations Clay Buchanan, assistant deputy minister of strategic initiatives and finance John Donner, assistant deputy minister of indigenous women's initiatives and staff engagement Tracy Balash, Lorne Harvey, senior financial officer, and David Dear, communications director.

We are at a very interesting point in time in the relationship between the government of Alberta and the indigenous people of Alberta. As a government we are working toward a new future based on a relationship of trust, respect, and reconciliation. Monumental documents such as the truth and reconciliation commission final report and the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples are the blueprints to a promising and hopeful path forward. Reconciliation is a call to action from indigenous people for substantive change, and it is the work, focus, and ambition of my ministry to heed that call.

My department's budget for 2017 demonstrates our commitment to making that change a reality. We've set an ambitious agenda under Budget 2017 aimed at strengthening and transforming our relationship with indigenous peoples. Under this agenda we will continue to pursue key agreements with indigenous peoples that address important issues and advance our shared desire for an improved social and economic standing for indigenous peoples in Alberta.

Protocol agreements provide mechanisms for effective engagement to address key issues and advance our relationships. Last year the Premier signed a historic protocol agreement with Treaty 8. The signing of this agreement was in keeping with our promise of a fundamental shift in our relationship with the indigenous people of Alberta. Most recently, in March, our government signed a similar agreement with the Blackfoot Confederacy. We expect to sign an agreement with Treaty 6 in the very near future. In January this year we signed a new framework agreement with the Métis Nation of Alberta that provides a platform to work toward improving the social and economic lives of the Métis people.

Our 2017 agenda focuses on four key priorities. Briefly, we will be working with our partners in ministries across government to implement the principles of the United Nations declaration. This is vital to forging a stronger relationship with indigenous peoples. This year we continue the comprehensive work of engagement with indigenous leaders in communities on these proposals as we work together to take action implementing the principles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

First Nations need access to clean and safe drinking water, and I'm proud that our government has committed \$100 million to ensure that more First Nations communities have access to clean and safe drinking water by integrating existing drinking water systems with federally supported systems on reserves. We will work with First Nations and the federal government to identify need and which projects can be funded. We will also work with municipalities to build partnerships with First Nations. While there is much work still to be done, this is an important step toward fulfilling our commitment to the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

We are engaged with First Nations on a government-to-government basis to develop a consultation policy that is respectful to the nations and their treaty rights. We are meeting First Nation by First Nation. Following our successful development and

implementation of a consultation policy with and for the Métis settlements last year, we are now working to develop a new consultation policy with off-settlement Métis.

**9:10**

We are engaging and investing with indigenous partners to help ensure that they are full participants in and benefactors of the Alberta climate leadership plan. The initiative is intended to support indigenous leaders and communities to participate in climate leadership opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, stimulate green economic development, and generate green jobs. This includes working together to develop a joint decision-making structure. This structure will allow representatives of indigenous communities and government to decide together the services, programs, and supports that will enable indigenous communities and people to transition to a lower carbon economy. While we develop this structure, we will build on last year's successful pilot solar and audit programs to support First Nations and Métis in taking action as part of the climate leadership plan.

Indigenous Relations is the fulcrum for bringing about a transformational change and strengthening relationships between the government of Alberta and indigenous Albertans. Our ministry provides leadership and advice to other ministries and works closely with them on indigenous issues and policies. We engage with indigenous communities and peoples, the federal government, industry, and other partners to create greater social and economic opportunities for indigenous people. However, it's important to note that this work requires an all-of-government approach. All government ministries are and must be involved. This is most evident by the critical work we are undertaking with other ministries to develop policy and champion initiatives that will help to implement the principles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Now let me talk some numbers. In 2017-2018 the Ministry of Indigenous Relations' total budget is \$192.8 million. Although this is almost identical to last year, the reality is that there is additional funding in other departments dedicated to a number of our priorities and initiatives. A hundred and fifty-one million dollars in funding has been identified in the Alberta climate change office budget to support the transition of indigenous peoples to a lower carbon economy. Government has budgeted a total of \$100 million in new funding over four years to support the First Nations drinking water initiative. Although the funding rests with Transportation, who will have the lead on project construction, Indigenous Relations will work to develop partnerships required to support the projects under the initiatives. In addition, Seniors and Housing has been allocated \$120 million for off-reserve housing.

The majority of our budget is grant funding, which includes \$129 million of our budget this year for the First Nations development fund. This is revenue from casinos on First Nations reserves that is allocated to assist in First Nations development.

Ten million dollars has been allocated 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 settlement consultation capacity, and \$5.9 million for essential service education, training, and safe communities.

Seven point two million dollars is allocated to support indigenous communities to take advantage of local economic opportunities; \$1.8 million is allocated for the employment partnerships program from the Canada-Alberta job fund; \$6.9 million for First Nations consultation capacity to ensure that First Nations have the resources necessary to participate in consultation processes; \$1.8 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 work on the climate leadership plan; \$5 million for the aboriginal business investment fund, to provide funding to capitalize community-owned business development opportunities. This program offers direct investment into eligible indigenous community-owned businesses. And \$3.1 million for flood recovery on Siksika First Nations.

Our budget is focused on building a better future with indigenous people in Alberta. That better future will be defined by the ability of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit to fully participate in and benefit from the social and economic life of the province. That is our goal and our focus. A better future for indigenous peoples means having a better province and future for all Albertans.

In achieving that goal, we will work closely with indigenous communities and organizations side by side every step of the way. As the United Nations declaration makes clear, it is vital that indigenous peoples be involved in decisions and projects and the resolution of issues that affect them. In the wake of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the report of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it is essential that we make these investments.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister.

Before we continue, we just have a couple of introductions. Mr. MacIntyre, I don't believe you had a chance to introduce yourself for the record.

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

**The Chair:** Also Ms Babcock.

**Ms Babcock:** Erin Babcock, Stony Plain.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

For the 50 minutes that follow, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. Would you like a timer set at 20-minute intervals?

**Mr. Hanson:** That would be great. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Perfect. Thank you. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Chair, and I'd like to go back and forth with the minister. First of all, thanks, Minister, for coming, and to your staff for their dedicated work. I think both you and I can agree that we're kind of on the same page when it comes to this file, but I do have a few questions regarding your budget.

We'll start with the business plan. In the business plan on page 89, key strategy 1.1, it says, "Working with Indigenous leaders and communities to deepen our understanding of the UN Declaration and the priorities of Indigenous peoples." I'm just wondering what you've accomplished on this so far this year, how many meetings you've held, who you've met with, that sort of thing.

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, as I know you are quite aware, we've created quite an extensive process with regard to the United Nations declaration because it very much is a keystone of the work that we're going to be doing, ongoing for many years. The simple, practical mechanism that was used to initiate the process was to ask every single ministry in the government to examine the United Nations declaration and to come to a place of understanding of where they could change their laws, their rules, their programs and so on to be more consistent with the declaration.

At the same time, we asked seven community organizations – treaties 6, 7, and 8, the Métis Nation of Alberta, the Metis

Settlements General Council, the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, and the friendship centres of Alberta – to all do the same thing. From that a variety of ideas and thoughts were put together from all of those groups, and our department spent time looking at places that we could move forward on. We were then able to put together a list of approximately 20 items of movement forward that we could engage in with the communities.

Now, when we went and spoke with the communities, one of the things they were very clear about is that it would be essentially a violation of the declaration itself for us to develop a set of specific activities we would engage in because we'd decided to do that and just push forward. Instead they made it very clear in our conversations, particularly at the protocol tables and other meetings that we've had, to bring forward ideas such as the 20 items that came out of that process but not to assume that those ideas became the plan to move forward. As they indicated, that would just simply be government making up its own mind and moving forward.

Instead we've been engaged in a process of working with the First Nations to look at those ideas but also to have them put ideas on the table, to go back and forth as much as possible. The signing of the protocol agreements with Treaty 8 originally and now the Blackfoot Confederacy and, hopefully, Treaty 6 very soon allows us a place where that conversation can occur. Here are the ideas. They didn't want you to come to the table and just simply say, "What do you want?" They said, "You have to put something on the table, too." So we put the 20 ideas on the table. Then we listened, and they began to pick some of the areas that are important. As a result, we've made some pretty substantive changes in terms of the United Nations declaration, I think. The most obvious one is that the right to clean and safe drinking water has been identified both in the Truth and Reconciliation . . .

**Mr. Hanson:** I've got questions on that coming up.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. So I'll leave that.

It's been a very engaging process. I think that what's really different now is that we are always working with the First Nations communities to develop the strategies of moving forward, to listen to their ideas, and to really try to find a way to have a partnership.

When we get to talking about the climate leadership plan, I can tell you about how we've gone about it in a very different way as a result of exactly this.

**9:20**

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay. Thank you.

You did mention in your answer the native friendship centres. I understand that there are a few of them that are having some financial difficulties. There seem to be backlogs in the federal government funding of that. Is there anything in your department that has some oversight on the friendship centres, kind of monitoring them so they don't have to close their doors? I know that the one out in St. Paul had to close down for a while because of just serious lack of funding. Is there some way that we can engage the First Nations to also get involved in those? I think a lot of times that may be part of the issue, if we could have some more engagement from them.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. Mr. Hanson, I really think you've hit on something that's extremely important. The friendship centres are essentially a creation of the federal government in a way, I mean, obviously created by the people themselves, but their initial funding came from the federal government. They were initially funded at a certain level over the years. Then the previous federal government decreased the amount of funding to the friendship centres, and it put them in a difficult place. Last year when I first became minister, I

was able to increase funding to the friendship centres at that time, but because it was late in the year, by only \$100,000. So it meant a small increase for the 20 friendship centres across the province. We have been in conversation with them ever since because they are finding themselves in a difficult place.

I do think we have to work closely with the federal government. I have addressed this issue with the federal minister, Minister Bennett, because I think it's a very important thing to be doing.

We're also in consultation with the friendship centres themselves, talking to them about plans. For example, last August I met with all the front-line First Nations, Inuit, and Métis organizations in Calgary, where we began to talk about work in the urban area, work with them. I've subsequently been back twice to have conversations with the Calgary friendship centre staff, where they're looking at projects moving forward. They have an exciting proposal for building a new facility in Calgary, that we hope we'll be able to help with.

At this time, you know, in this budget you'll see that there's \$857,000 in total for the friendship centres. I do think that's one area that I'd like to see us make some improvement on if we can over time. Budget constraints are the issue for us, as you can well image.

**Mr. Hanson:** One other comment. I think the one in St. Paul gets \$32,000 a year from the province. When you take out the carbon tax that they have to pay extra this year and the increases in the minimum wages because they do have paid staff, you know, we should be maybe looking at an increase that at least covers those increases.

**Mr. Feehan:** There are a number of things that are important. One is that they did receive almost a 20 per cent increase last year. That was substantive at the time. I appreciate your concern that more might be even . . .

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, they have really good programs, and if they close down for even a month, it really disrupts the kids that are involved in those programs.

**Mr. Feehan:** Of course.

The other thing is that we've been working closely with all of the communities, but the friendship centres have been included in terms of all of our climate leadership plans. A number of the friendship centres – and I apologize; I'm not sure about St. Paul – have come forward and have been part of our solar pilot project and our energy audit pilot project. As we have the new monies rolling forward, we'll be encouraging them to come and allow us to help them to look at energy efficiency pieces so that they can deal with the changes in terms of the carbon levy.

For example, I was speaking with one of the reserves about their big public building. When they put the solar panels on the roof at Montana band – and it's just their one big public building – they told me they were saving \$2,000 a month in electrical costs.

**Mr. Hanson:** That was an initiative that they took upon themselves, but this is prior . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** They did, and we're duplicating. Because it was such a successful thing to do and something that was initiated by the First Nations community, we're really duplicating that all across the province, including the friendship centres.

I can also remind you that the climate leadership plan has, in and of itself, a program for nonprofits to come forward, so they can come forward to us as members of the indigenous community, but

they can also go to the climate leadership office because there is a plan for nonprofits to build – you know, solar is the quick one.

**Mr. Hanson:** They could go up, but they'd still have a fairly hefty initial investment. When we're talking about associations that can't afford to keep their lights on, it's pretty hard for them to go and invest a bunch of money in solar.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. You're right, which is why the First Nations plan, sometimes referred to as ICLI, or the indigenous climate leadership initiative, allows for a much greater level of participation by the government in the establishment of those solar panels and so on whereas the other plans require much greater input by the local organizations.

**Mr. Hanson:** But do the native friendship centres fall under that?

**Mr. Feehan:** They do.

**Mr. Hanson:** They do? Okay.

**Mr. Feehan:** The native friendship centres can apply, and if the circumstances are such that they really simply do not have the money to come forward, we can look at increasing the percentage of the overall costs that the government will pay as opposed to the friendship centres.

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, like I say, when they can't afford to keep their lights on and have to close their doors, it's hard for them to talk about initial investments in solar.

**Mr. Feehan:** Exactly why it was designed that way.

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay. Let's move on, then. You also mentioned water projects, which I think are very important. I know that there are a few issues up in our area as well. Do you have a list of projects and priorities, a couple you could mention and maybe table them as well?

**Mr. Feehan:** It's an important thing, again, that we need to talk about. In this particular case the focus is on ensuring that there is safe and clean drinking water for the communities. Again, because of this renewed relationship, we're really trying to step up to do things differently than in the past. We haven't simply set it up as a program that you apply to. Instead, the communities are invited to work with us and describe the water issues in their communities. For some of them, for example, it may be that there's a boil-water advisory and that they simply can't use the water at all. In Alberta, actually, there are two communities that have a complete boil-water advisory. Others, because the individual well for that facility is not good, they might have a particular facility that is on a boil-water advisory.

For other communities, of course, it's not an issue of a boil-water advisory; it's about the security and safety of having regular access to water. They might be taking water from a lake. I know, having just recently been up in Kehewin, for example, close to your area, that they identified that part of the problem is that they see the water level of the lake dropping, and they're worried about long-term consistency in terms of water safety. So the issues are different for different communities.

As well, one of the things that was described by the communities as a concern is around the relationship they have with where the water comes from and their ability to maintain some control over the water. Part of the discussion is: do they want to be part of a regional water system? It's not simply a matter of, you know, plugging them in but asking them: is this something that they want

to have happen? Again, for example, at Kehewin their concern was: if we plug into the local water system in the area, will we be sitting on the board? Will we have an opportunity to participate in the distribution of the water and the decision-making that goes on around that?

Our process is much more of a collaborative, consultative process. We haven't set out, you know: these are the 20 projects that are going to happen. We're working with every community to describe their needs, and this year we will see some very quick movement in a few communities. For example, Alexis has been working very closely with us already for the last year or so to describe them, and we anticipate that they'll be one of the first ones connected. Over the next four years we'll be working with each community to see whether or not this is the right program for them.

Some of the limitations, of course, are that we as a province are in a position where we can quite readily build systems that come up to the edge of the reserve, but the second we arrive at the edge of the reserve, then we need to ensure that the federal government is participating in the project. We have got the commitment of the federal government that whenever we are working with the First Nations communities to build a water system, they will not become a block, that if we build up to the edge, they will automatically be there with us in building the system on the reserve itself. I think we're looking fairly good right now. It's a nice example of a tripartite relationship between the three governments.

9:30

**Mr. Hanson:** Minister, it has to be. It has to work that way. We need to address that for health care and education as well.

**Mr. Feehan:** It's a model that we're hoping to improve on because I don't think in the past the federal government has always been at the table.

**Mr. Hanson:** It hasn't worked very well.

**Mr. Feehan:** No.

**Mr. Hanson:** Just specifically, then, are you aware of Goodfish Lake's desire to tie into the EPCOR line that runs along highway 28?

**Mr. Feehan:** Yes. It's definitely one of the ones that we are working with right now to see if that's the appropriate thing to do.

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay. My next question is: do you know what an interbasin transfer is?

**Mr. Feehan:** I do.

**Mr. Hanson:** And how difficult it can be?

**Mr. Feehan:** Yes, it is. That's why we have to spend a lot of time on the project. It's not simply: let's dig a hole and put a pipe into it and run it along. Many of the communities are also worried that if we start to have interbasin transfers, there are going to be collateral effects, and somebody else is going to be concerned that, you know, they used to get their water from the local lake, and now they're getting their water from . . .

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, that may be something that we have to address as a government because that particular clause in the Water Act is kind of – we're working on an interbasin transfer right now on the waterline between Spedden and Mallaig, down the rail line. You can fill up a water truck in Spedden and drive it to Mallaig and dump it in, but you can't run it through pipeline. It kind of doesn't

make a lot of sense that way. It is quite complex. You know, I'd be willing to work together with you through the process of it because it's a piece of legislation that has to get passed in the House. Possibly, if we could get it tied in with the interbasin transfer to Mallaig and make it part of the same project, it might simplify things.

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, I'd be more than happy to sit down and talk to you about the specific needs of this particular project and how it will affect that. We also need to of course make those decisions at a larger level, where it's not just the particular situation that you're talking about but those same types of situations that are repeated throughout the province.

One of the other things you should know is that the Department of Environment and Parks and I have set up a water discussion table with chiefs from all the different treaty organizations – treaties 6, 7, and 8 – in order to discuss some of those larger water issues. You know, the First Nations communities are fairly clear. They don't feel they've given up their rights to water by signing treaties. So we have to have discussions around: what does that mean, what will happen if we start to invest a lot in water transfer, who gets to decide how much water goes to any one community, what happens when we find ourselves in a place where the water availability is decreased, and who is affected? That was Kehewin's concern: are we the fifth person on the line, and are we going to one day find just a little dribble coming out of the pipe?

**Mr. Hanson:** Just get a trickle.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. Exactly.

**Mr. Hanson:** It is a problem, for sure.

Okay. We'll move on a little bit to transportation. I'm hitting on some kind of specifics that are in my area because that's where I get most of the questions from. Saddle Lake. There's a north-south road that goes through there, range road 121. I'm just wondering if you're aware of issues that are coming up on that.

**Mr. Feehan:** We are. As you know, I was out at Saddle Lake – I don't know – a month and a half or so ago, and we had that explicit discussion. Of course, they made sure that I drove the road so that I knew exactly what they were experiencing. We've been having discussions with Transportation about that.

Again, it's one of these very difficult problems that we're going to have to start handling differently in the future in that the question becomes: can Alberta Transportation build a road on-reserve if the road itself is still designated as federal land? That's problematic for us. It's why we are really changing a lot of what we're doing in terms of the ministry because we not only now have to have a conversation with Saddle Lake; we now have to go to Transportation and work with them to get things into their budget planning but also determine whether or not they can in fact go ahead and do that. If they can't, can we involve the federal government in coming forward? It may be, again, you know, INAC, the Indian and northern affairs, or it might not be. It might be federal transportation that needs to come in and do these things.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah. That particular reserve is an example because they have that east-west road that runs through there. It was, I believe, the federal government that signed an agreement, bought the land off the Saddle Lake First Nation, then gave it to the province.

**Mr. Feehan:** Correct.

**Mr. Hanson:** And the province built the highway and now has to maintain it. There's a strip of land that runs right through the middle of the reserve that doesn't belong to the reserve.

**Mr. Feehan:** That's right.

**Mr. Hanson:** And it's pretty complex. It's not something that happens overnight.

**Mr. Feehan:** No.

**Mr. Hanson:** You know, being that this agreement comes up, I believe, this year, it may be that the process has to start on that. I guess that's my concern, that I don't want to wait. There are a lot of people that use that north-south route, and they're quite interested in that, if they could develop that road and develop more business in the town, the community of Saddle Lake.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. Actually, we've already started these discussions, as you know. I mean, it was one of the things that was brought up at my visit to Saddle Lake. We've already started to have these discussions with Transportation and some movement toward the federal government. But if it does take this process of where we simply have to buy that whole strip of land, turn it from federal into provincial land, then pave it, you're talking multiple years, I assure you. On top of that, then we have to also make a decision about: if we are taking land away from the reserve, the strip of land that the road is on, then we, by treaty rights, have to give them back another piece of land to accommodate that. [A timer sounded]

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you.  
Oh, we can keep going? Sorry.

**The Chair:** Yeah, 20 minutes.

**Mr. Feehan:** We would also then have to make decisions as to: where do they get that extra piece of land? We have a similar situation, for example, with the Stoney people right now and highway 1A. We're going to correct and straighten highway 1A, but then we need to give them 250 acres. Well, where do you find 250 acres? You can't give them 250 acres in the middle of nowhere. It should be attached to the reserve, but are there any lands immediately beside the Saddle Lake reserve that are available, that we could buy up? Are there farmers that are willing to sell their land or . . .

**Mr. Hanson:** You know, there might be something that we could do with economic development right in the community, do a trade-off that way.

**Mr. Feehan:** Uh-huh.

**Mr. Hanson:** I guess that brings me to my next question about carbon tax and how it affects businesses on reserves and on Métis settlements. Could you kind of expand on that?

**Mr. Feehan:** Sure. Well, they're slightly different, so let me just speak about that. It's two separate groups. With regard to reserves the treaty that we have signed with treaties 6, 7, and 8 indicates that there is no taxation of people for work done on-reserve. So we're very clear that there is no taxation for any businesses that are conducting their business on the reserve itself, and if businesses from off-reserve are coming on-reserve in order to conduct business, they are not to charge the carbon tax to the First Nations for any work that's done on the reserve itself.

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay. Would that cover home builders that are building spec homes, modular homes that are being moved?

**Mr. Feehan:** It does.

**Mr. Hanson:** Is that right?

**Mr. Feehan:** It does.

**Mr. Hanson:** Interesting.

**Mr. Feehan:** The settlements, of course, are slightly different because there is no treaty obligation not to tax on settlements. Settlements, in fact, will be in the position of charging the carbon levy for home builds or any other business activity on the settlements themselves. They are therefore being really encouraged to take advantage of – well, this year it's \$41 million – the carbon leadership program for Indigenous Relations. That's \$151 million over the next three years for exactly that kind of work, to do an assessment, an evaluation, of their homes and to reduce their carbon footprint as a way of counteracting those bills. As I mentioned earlier, it's a little bit more of a generous government portion relationship on the settlements than it would be off the settlements in order to account for the fact that they often don't have the dollars to put forward, just as you mentioned.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah. That lump of money, then: there's no designation that this specific amount is just for First Nations and this is just for Métis settlements?

**Mr. Feehan:** No.

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay. It goes on a project-by-project basis.

**Mr. Feehan:** We have that money right now together, and it's done project by project. Hopefully, when we build this new governance structure, that we're working on right now with all the indigenous communities, then we will allow that governance structure to make the decisions. This year we'll be rolling it out from the department, but that's not the long-term plan.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah. There are some really interesting programs or plans in the works for Kikino and Buffalo Lake Métis settlements.

**Mr. Feehan:** There are. They're very exciting.

**Mr. Hanson:** They've got a great group of people up there. They're really working hard.

**Mr. Feehan:** I know. Yeah, as you know, I've been up to visit both Kikino and Buffalo Lake, and they come down to visit me as well. They're very entrepreneurial, very engaged.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yes.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yes, they are.

**Mr. Hanson:** They've got some great ideas.

**Mr. Feehan:** I agree.

9:40

**Mr. Hanson:** I was, actually, at a hemp conference, and they have a building material. They're almost like Lego blocks that are built out of a hemp and concrete amalgamation. They're looking at a project to promote that up at Kikino as well.

**Mr. Feehan:** Where they'll actually build those blocks?

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, they're actually going to grow it, process it, and build the blocks.

**Mr. Feehan:** Oh.

**Mr. Hanson:** I'm really hoping that that gets off the ground because it's pretty exciting.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. I hadn't heard of that particular one, but that's pretty exciting. You know, our aboriginal business investment fund is exactly dedicated toward helping those kinds of things, setting up business plans, even getting started, sometimes, with some capital. Let's make sure we have a conversation afterwards.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah. Because the nice thing about it is that they're sitting on, you know, I think it's 1.2 million acres of Métis settlements land, and it's all basically organic farmland.

**Mr. Feehan:** It is.

**Mr. Hanson:** So we've got that advantage. You know, growing organic hemp and processing it provides jobs and skilled labour and education right on the lands.

**Mr. Feehan:** Exactly.

**Mr. Hanson:** A really good initiative if we can see it get through. Okay. We'll get into some numbers, I guess. Line 2 on page 168. There's a decrease of \$5,467,000. It seems like a significant decrease compared to last year's budget and forecast. Has this been split between operating expenses and capital grants?

**Mr. Feehan:** This is line 2, the First Nations and Métis relations?

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah.

**Mr. Feehan:** I just want to make sure I'm on the right page.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah. Line 2, page 168.

**Mr. Feehan:** Great. Thank you. It does look like there is a change, but it actually is a little complicated but also not that significant in the sense that there's a \$5 million reprofiling of money from the First Nations and Métis relations budget down to, under capital grants, 2, First Nations and Métis relations because we realized that in the fund in question the monies that were actually being spent were not being spent on services and so on. They were by their very nature being spent on capital investments. So this is essentially making it clearer to everyone that these are capital expenditures rather than that. That's the aboriginal business investment fund, that I mentioned earlier. For example, we were up in Beaver First Nations recently. They just bought a big bulldozer, and we were able to provide funding for them to buy that bulldozer. For this kind of money it made more sense to reflect it in the place it would be more appropriately reflected.

There is one other change that you may also want to be aware of. Last year we received some one-time money from Labour for enhanced programs for people to learn trades. That was \$4.8 million that was given to us last year that wouldn't be in this next year because we can't anticipate. They may indeed want to give us that again, but we can't anticipate that until they actually give it to us.

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay. Moving on, then, last year in estimates you indicated that the minister's office budget for travel was \$30,000. Do you have the numbers for this year?

**Mr. Feehan:** Travel. Let me just see. We'll just take a minute to look it up, but my sense is that we're keeping it essentially the same. You know, I'm going to have to get back to you about the specific travel budget. My apologies.

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay. That's fine.

**Mr. Feehan:** My recollection is that it's essentially the same amount. We did a lot of travel last year, as you may know, but we were able to accommodate all of that within the budget as it was, without any need to seek extra funds.

**Mr. Hanson:** That's kind of why I was asking it because we had known that last year's was \$30,000. I know that you've been out quite a bit this year, so I'm just wondering what the change is there.

**Mr. Feehan:** So far I've been to 34 of the 48 First Nations and three of the settlements. Of course, I've met everybody from everywhere, but the other ones I've seen only when we were at joint meetings here in Edmonton or at other functional meetings.

**Mr. Hanson:** Well, I'm sure that you've seen that things aren't equal all over the province when it comes to development of our First Nations.

**Mr. Feehan:** No, they are not.

Oh, I think we may have the number here. Yes. It's \$30,000 exactly. It's the same number set this year. We have some flexibility if need be within, of course . . .

**Mr. Hanson:** You must have gotten a Prius. Just kidding.

**Mr. Feehan:** That may be something I should invest in here.

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay. Line 1.6 is information management and technology. It seems to kind of bounce around that \$1.4 million. This year's budget is \$1.5 million. Can you just explain kind of what that line item covers?

**Mr. Feehan:** Right. Well, essentially, there is an increase of \$124,000, an internal budget transfer from divisions. It's just simply that we've had people move into the department that previously provided services from outside of the department in technology. That essentially allows us to provide the new contract for the staff, and there is a small increase in terms of inflation.

**Mr. Hanson:** Can you tell me what that line item, information management and technology, actually does?

**Mr. Feehan:** What it does?

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah.

**Mr. Feehan:** You know, why don't I actually just have Lorne answer the question for you just to make it real simple. He's trying to write me a note. I can tell you generally that it's IT.

**Mr. Harvey:** Generally we have a shared-service arrangement with EDT, and that covers our information technology, our FOIP, and also our ministerial correspondence units. It all falls under that one line item.

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay. Thank you.

All right. Let's see where else we go. We also saw a \$240,000, or 42 per cent, increase in human resources. Is that just all new staff, or is that a transfer of staff?

**Mr. Feehan:** Again, it's a transfer of where the dollars are sitting. We previously were provided those services out of another ministry, and now we have transferred \$240,000 with the organization. It's not a change overall in costs to the taxpayer in any way. It's just simply that six positions who are providing those services to us now were moved from Economic Development and Trade into our own ministry, just simply a transfer of where the work is sitting in government.

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay. That will bring me to my next question. On page 90, under outcome 1, key strategy 1.3 is to improve socioeconomic outcomes for indigenous communities and peoples. I can't think of any things that would be more beneficial to improve the socioeconomic outcomes for indigenous people than to have them working in your department. Last year I asked you a question about how many indigenous people you had in your department, so I guess I'm throwing that back at you again this year. Have we seen any improvements in that?

**Mr. Feehan:** You know, as I probably said last year, I think it's an excellent question. The reality, though, is that the government doesn't ask that question of people when they hire them, so there's no way to know for us to know exactly how many indigenous people . . .

**Mr. Hanson:** It's just that it makes sense in this department.

**Mr. Feehan:** It does.

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay.

**Mr. Feehan:** I agree with you a hundred per cent. I think we work really hard to try to encourage indigenous people to come forward and work for us. We have, as I'm sure you're well aware, an internship program where people can come forward and explore working with us over a period of time. We have that across ministries, of course. Our ministry has participated in that program consistently. Whenever we go out into the communities, frankly, we are often fishing for people. We go to communities like Saddle Lake, and I get the chance to meet all of their people and their staff, and we often encourage people to make application to work with us.

You may know as well that we've made a very concerted effort with regard to our agencies, boards, and commissions in this province whereas in the past very few indigenous people were ever appointed to agencies, boards, and commissions because of the way it was done. Part of our opening it up now is that we are dramatically increasing the number of indigenous people that are on all those boards and commissions – don't forget that they spend, actually, about 60 per cent of our provincial budget – to have their voices at those tables. We're very happy this year, for example, to have someone on the health board, a Métis nurse from Calgary.

**Mr. Hanson:** This is kind of my point. If you take the Ministry of Education, I'm sure that they hire a lot of, you know, teachers and principals and people with education experience. Same thing with health care. They've got a lot of doctors and nurses on staff. So it only makes sense to me that in a ministry like Indigenous Relations we would have some people from southern Alberta. I know that the customs and the way people live in northern Alberta on reserves are different, so you couldn't have just one person representing the whole nation. It does make sense to me that you'd have . . .

9:50

**Mr. Feehan:** I agree with you one hundred per cent. To have someone who is Cree from northern Alberta represent their point of

view does not in any way reflect the Blackfoot Confederacy's point of view . . .

**Mr. Hanson:** Oh, absolutely not.

**Mr. Feehan:** . . . on particular things. As a result, we hire people all across the province to work in a variety of areas. For example, I was just down at the South Saskatchewan regional plan meeting, the first meeting, the coming together of all the chiefs and all the departments. The three, you know, really great women that had put this whole program together came to me, and they were very pleased to tell me that one of them was from Treaty 6, one was from Treaty 7, and one was from Treaty 8. What they liked about that is that they felt they were representing quite a diverse range of voices.

It's really our commitment. We don't have a good way of measuring it because the government has decided not to ask people about their ethnicity, so we can't do that. I can tell you we have very close relationships. We hire people to act as liaisons from Clay's department, assigned to each reserve. And, you know, when I go up to your area, Charles comes from the Cold Lake reserve, and he guides me through and walks me through. If I go down to the Lethbridge area, Kimmy comes, and she's Blackfoot. She walks me through all of those areas.

So we spent a lot of time ensuring that the voices are not only there but that they're complex voices. You know, we have to remind people sometimes that we have five central language groups in this province, and they're not all equally represented all the time. The other thing is that we have put together the First Nations and Métis women's economic security councils. Both of those councils represent a very wide range of people throughout the province, including all the language groups and including the Inuit, by the way, who often tell me that they're completely neglected in this whole process, but we've included them on a routine basis.

**Mr. Hanson:** I think also that last year I had mentioned the fact that I get approached by elders from different areas who say: we don't think our voice is being heard because whenever government goes out, they speak to the chief and council, but very seldom do they speak to the community at large. Have you done any I don't want to call them town halls but that type of thing, where you've got just the elders' groups?

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. It's a very important issue. Whenever we go to a community, of course, we can't tell the community who they have to have there, but they inevitably would have their chief and council and inevitably would have at least a few elders there. We will never touch all the elders. We are, however, trying to work very hard at finding places for the elders. For example, just two days ago I was at Enoch for the Treaty 6 elders and youth council meeting, where I went with Grand Chief Littlechild to talk to them about the United Nations declaration. I was just there on Tuesday, I guess it was, and had a chance to meet a room of maybe 200 elders. You may also be aware that yesterday we made an announcement to provide \$100,000 to the first national elders' meeting to be held in this country.

**Mr. Hanson:** That's exactly the kind of stuff I'm talking about.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. Grand Chief Rupert Meneen from Tallcree is the instigation behind all of this, and he's worked very hard. We're very happy to support him. He has not only set up this event that's happening in early September, September 11 to 14, but he's also designed a process where there have been a series of pipe ceremonies from north, south, east, and west, where they bring together the elders from Alberta to talk about how this event will be

constructed. I've been invited, and I have attended those with the elders.

I personally am getting to know quite a few elders from across the province, and that includes not only elders from the First Nations community, by the way, but the Métis community. One of the things that we're very proud about is the fact that we are really having people come together to talk in such a variety of ways. Grand Chief Meneen, you know, just very clearly said that this is not just about First Nations people, and he has invited Métis people from across the province to be there. We are having very important conversations with all the voices at the table in a way that hasn't happened in the past. And that's not on me. Honestly, that's on people like Grand Chief Meneen.

**Mr. Hanson:** Okay. Thank you very much. That's good progress.

The next question. I know that in Municipal Affairs they talk about intermunicipal – what's the word I'm looking for? – where they have different municipalities working . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** ICFs?

**Mr. Hanson:** Yes. Exactly. Intermunicipal collaboration frameworks. A lot of times the First Nations and settlements are left out of those discussions. I'm just wondering if you've had any meetings. I know that out in my area I'm trying to get together with the county of St. Paul, the town of St. Paul, and Saddle Lake and Goodfish. A lot of the folks from those areas come into town to use facilities, and it's to everybody's advantage to kind of work together to make sure we've got the best.

**Mr. Feehan:** Let me assure you, Mr. Hanson, that this is a very important area to talk about, and it's a complex area. I've been working very closely with the Minister of Municipal Affairs because they have made a provision in the MGA, changes that were just brought into the House this week, to require municipalities to have ICFs, framework agreements, with each other. However, we couldn't force them to have framework agreements with First Nations because we can't put First Nations people in the Municipal Government Act. They're not municipalities and would be quite offended if we tried to do that.

So he and I made a series of phone calls to the grand chiefs throughout the province and discussed this issue with them. I subsequently made a number of phone calls to other chiefs as well to talk about . . . [A timer sounded]

**Mr. Hanson:** Ten more?

**The Chair:** Ten more.

**Mr. Feehan:** Ten more minutes? Okay. I don't know how to interpret all the bells around here.

The conversation that we're having is about: how do we include the First Nations? Now, it's complex because we are bringing in a piece that says that it's okay for First Nations and municipalities to sign an agreement, but we can't force that to happen. However, we've been getting some serious backlash from the First Nations communities about even putting that much into the MGA because they do not want to be put at a level where they believe that we see them as equal to municipalities. They are nations, and they want to be talking to us. They haven't necessarily taken it up with great relish. We're trying to make it available.

I've been saying to them that we're doing two things at once here. One of them is just creating an opportunity, making it possible. I've spent time with the minister saying: we need to establish a new body where we actually get together with the First Nations and the local

municipalities and start to have conversations that never happened before. I've met with, you know, people all across the province who want to do that but who haven't done that. You may know that I've been up in Big Stone talking to them about their relationship with the local municipality. I was down just outside of Lethbridge in . . .

**Mr. Buchanan:** Cardston.

**Mr. Feehan:** Cardston. Thank you. I met with the local town council there, same conversations, and with the town council of High Prairie. I've met with some of the members there. All of them are saying the same thing: we want to work closer with our First Nations people.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah, there can be some really mutual advantages to that.

**Mr. Feehan:** But when I take that conversation to the First Nations communities, they get very nervous. They get nervous that somehow we're going to diminish their rights by making them just simply municipalities, and we can't do that. We're trying to find ways to just bring people to the table without defining it somehow in a way that's unacceptable but to ensure that there's a true conversation.

When I think about the water system, that we were talking about earlier, I think about somewhere like Slave Lake, for example, that has six First Nations communities all around one side of Slave Lake, but interspersed between those six communities there are four non First Nations communities. How much more sense would it make to tie all of those people together, which is only a population of maybe 20,000 – that's just a rough estimate out of my own head; you know, it's only that many people – rather than having six different First Nations water treatment plants?

**Mr. Hanson:** Oh, absolutely. Yeah, I've got some good examples that we can talk about later.

I have one last question that I have to get in, and I'd like you to have a chance to answer it. I apologize, but I have to ask you the question. On March 16 I asked you and the government to issue a formal apology for the '60s scoop and the role that the province had.

**Mr. Feehan:** I thought that your question was very appropriate. I think the reaction you saw from me was my own frustration around some of these pieces. I absolutely fundamentally believe that this is part of the oppression that's occurred to First Nations communities, and I am very concerned about it. I have been concerned about it as a social worker for many years. I taught about the '60s scoop in my classes to my introduction to social work classes and talked about it as oppression, talked about it as something that needs to change.

I also can tell you that part of my work in my social work career has been around: how do you make apologies? I worked in the area of child sexual abuse, as you may know. I did a lot of work and did writing around: how do you do apologies? One of the things I was very clear about in that process was that making an apology is not the beginning of a process. Making an apology is somewhere closer to not quite the end of a process but well into a process because if you don't sit down and talk about what you are apologizing for and actually hear people out . . .

**10:00**

**Mr. Hanson:** Understand them.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. How does this affect your life? I think the best example of that, of course, is the TRC, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

You know, Canada did apologize for the residential schools, but they also went through a very significant process of listening to people's stories, hearing them out, giving them a chance to talk about their grief, about their trauma, and then sitting down at the end of that process and sharing the pen on the apology, saying: you tell me what constitutes a real apology. I'm committed to that. I have met with, you know, some of the same people you have met with as well, and that's what we've committed to, a process of designing a piece of work where we'll move around the province, where we'll hear people's stories, where we will truly help not only the government but the people of the province hear and understand what it is that we're apologizing for.

**Mr. Hanson:** I think we've got a good opportunity. I think, if you recall in my questions and my statement, I did mention that, you know, there are people that worked in those departments that are now sitting back, enjoying retirement, and you have people like Mr. North Peigan, who's roughly the same age as me, who's just trying to deal with the trauma that he experienced. These people are still alive. We can get them all and find out exactly what happened. I bet that there are some social workers and staff that worked for the province of Alberta that probably have some real stories to tell about that whole situation.

I think that while they're still able to talk about it, we should get that story out and make it part of the education system. I think that's a big part of the reconciliation that we're talking about. More than just to stand up and say, "I'm sorry," like, let's make sure that nothing like this ever happens again. I think this is one of the things that make people on First Nations nervous whenever we talk about – I think it's in Newfoundland and Labrador right now that they're taking kids off reserves to foster homes just because they say that there's no room in foster care on reserves. This is the kind of stuff that makes people nervous because they think: this happened once; it can happen again, and this is how it starts. Right? We have to be very cognizant of that.

But I think it's a real good learning opportunity right now to look back and, you know, put the feelers out. Maybe there are some people that worked in those departments that would be willing to come forward and actually share their story. I know that people like Adam are ready to share their stories. It might make for interesting conversation and a good educational opportunity.

**Mr. Feehan:** Absolutely. I think what you'll see over the next year is a process leading ultimately to an apology, but we will only do the apology when we feel like the process has actually touched on everything that you've talked about.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah. Okay.

I think we're running pretty close to short of time, so I'm going to just talk about the 2013 flooding. Where are we sitting? I know that Tsuut'ina is complete, but how much work is left at Siksika? The funding that's there: has it all been spent?

**Mr. Feehan:** We're very happy, of course, to say that all of the building on the Stoney reserves has all been completed. It's been done. There is a small piece of money that's set aside this year just for follow-up. It's about a million dollars this year that will allow us to ensure that for any final evaluation pieces, when they go to check the houses and so on, if something was missed, we have the dollars to resolve that. That's simply a technical little piece at the end.

The vast majority of the money that's set aside right now is for Siksika. They are going to be building about 138 houses in that community. One hundred and thirty-six houses had to be relocated

from the lower flood plain that – if you know the area, it's a valley that dips down. They have to be moved up.

You know, at the time of moving forward with this, Siksika had requested that they be in charge of the housing process rather than us. In respect, we've been delivering the dollars in an appropriate, financially responsible manner, but we haven't been pushing the development of the houses. They had some political problems because not everybody wanted to be moved up to the top of the hill and put into a community. They were used to living quite far, distant from each other a lot, and now they're building, essentially, a community with, you know, streets and so on. But they assure us that the build will happen this year.

They are aware that the monies come to an end approximately one year from now. The monies are set aside for that, so we anticipate that with our support they will be able to do all their builds this year. I'm hoping to come back to you next year at this time and say that this is no longer an issue for the government of Alberta.

**Mr. Hanson:** Do we have a similar situation in the Fort McMurray area after the wildfires?

**Mr. Feehan:** It's a slightly different situation. I think it's one that we will be talking about. I was just speaking with Chief Courtoreille on the weekend. He was in town for the provincial indigenous hockey tournament, so we sat down and had a conversation. There are some concerns there that we had sent up some trailers to Fort Chip, for example. I think he's feeling that they're not sufficient and also that the rents for the trailers are too high. We're continuing to work on those very particular kinds of issues. We will be looking at . . . [A timer sounded] Okay. This time I'm stopping.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr. Feehan:** How do you interpret the difference between those three bells?

**The Chair:** We'll now move on to the third party. Mr. Rodney, will you be combining your time with the minister?

**Mr. Rodney:** Yes, please and thank you.

**The Chair:** You have a total of 20 minutes. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the minister, staff. Hay-hay to everyone, including all of our indigenous friends who might be watching right now or might hear about this at a future date. I believe that we're around this table for the same reason. Once again I say thank you and hay-hay.

Minister, I feel the moral obligation to jump right into a scourge in our society right now, and that's fentanyl and opioids. As you know very well, I've asked on a number of occasions in question period questions of you, and because it goes across the board to the Health minister, the Justice minister, the Premier, I've asked questions there as well. As you know better than many, absolutely terrible things are happening out there, but as I pointed out in some of my questions, there are some amazing things that have happened, including in certain First Nations communities and with certain individuals, that are, you know, some of the best practices that I might have hoped had been transferred to other places. My questions are regarding estimates indeed but related to this topic. Minister, do you have enough money in your budget to combat this crisis in extremely effective ways, and what exactly is happening with that money?

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, you know, I think that your point that this is a serious crisis and one that needs to be dealt with is quite appropriate in that we have people dying, and that's something that we don't want to have happen. You will be aware, of course, though, that the actual responses to the opioid crisis are largely not held within my ministry because we don't have the people on the ground that are there. In the health clinic, of course, all of those people are in the Health department, and the police and other emergency groups who, for example, carry naloxone kits with them, again, are not employees of my department. They're employees of other ministries. What you'll find is that the large part of the response to this problem is going to be found in ministries other than our particular ministry.

Our ministry is working much more in terms of the relational piece that connects each of the reserves that comes forward and has concerns about things to the ministries that are appropriate to deal with these issues. You'll see that what we have done is we have made sure that we have increased the amount of resources that we have in the ministerial office to enhance that communication between our ministry and the other ministries because that's our role. It's the co-ordination role. It's the articulation of the needs of the communities role.

**Mr. Rodney:** I'm glad to hear you say that, Minister. Believe me, I don't expect you to answer on behalf of other ministers. You hit the nail on the head. That correlation absolutely must happen because it is a matter of life and death and, along those lines, in ways that neither you nor I – and I can't speak for anybody else that's here today – can feel some of the pain that occurs. This didn't happen on a reserve, but I would encourage everyone to read Chris Nelson's article from the *Calgary Herald* today because I think it does explain how difficult it is. It's really harsh, folks, including not only the title but what it says in there.

**10:10**

But I know, Chair, that we must refer to numbers. Just right at the end Chris refers to the fact that

when it comes to fighting opioid abuse, we're told that Alberta will spend "up to" \$56 million this year.

And he goes on. I'm just going to read what it says because this is how Albertans are feeling.

Yet, when battling climate change by cutting carbon emissions through free light bulbs and the like, we'll spend 10 times that – \$556 million – in the next three years. Theoretically saving the planet is much nicer than saving actual Albertans, and in that regard, you can't keep Notley quiet about her wondrous social license.

Now, this is just his – again, the question was, though: between you and the other departments do you have what you need to do what needs to be done to fend off this scourge?

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm sorry to hear, you know, such a cynical view of working with . . .

**Mr. Rodney:** Well, believe me, he has reason. It affected his family personally in the deepest way.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. I agree. I think that it's something that will touch on every Albertan. It's not just an indigenous issue, and I think I want to make that very clear. Fentanyl is not particularly worse in the indigenous community.

**Mr. Rodney:** But they have particular needs, right?

**Mr. Feehan:** They do.

**Mr. Rodney:** Things are different.

**Mr. Feehan:** That's why we have a role to participate in terms of: how does this play out in the indigenous community? The fact that we have to deal with the fentanyl crisis is indeed an all-government issue. We have every ministry looking at their role in participating in that. You know, you can say that we only have a small amount of money set for fentanyl, but that's really not true because we've designed massive systems that are all part of that. Our whole policing system, our whole health care system are all designed to help people in crisis. It happens to be fentanyl today. A few years back it was a different drug, right?

**Mr. Rodney:** It was crystal meth back when I was the chair of AADAC.

**Mr. Feehan:** Exactly.

**Mr. Rodney:** But this is a killer in a different way, and there's more to come.

**Mr. Feehan:** And the next one coming down the pipe is going to be even worse than that, I think.

**Mr. Rodney:** Ten or a hundred. There are different versions coming out.

Mr. Chair, I really want to support and encourage not only the minister but the Premier and the other ministers and ministries and the people who work with them. I mean, it's one thing to dedicate money, but it's the action. People are dying by the day, and we just want that to end.

**Mr. Feehan:** But it's also why we need to ensure that we have a medical system that is there and readily available, that isn't directed just toward resolving the issue of fentanyl because it has to be – you know, we put all this money into the revamp of the emergency at the Misericordia hospital, \$55 million, and the reason is that you need to have those concrete, structural responses to these kinds of issues, not just a one-off when a crisis happens to occur with a particular drug.

**Mr. Rodney:** Of course, but specifically referring to our indigenous Albertans, I would like to flip it on its head because, I mean, we can't ever forget this until it's done, and there's going to be something next we'll have to deal with as well.

I know that in my time in cabinet, in wellness, touring around the province, I made sure that I visited as many indigenous communities and individuals as I could, and I learned a great deal. I found out that there are a lot of wonderful things happening in terms of wellness. That was then. Could you just give us an update? What is your ministry doing now to encourage, you know, wellness programs that are occurring on First Nations reserves, for instance, and not just what's happening but on a go-forward basis? Let's face it. There are so many different cultures out there. There's a wealth of ideas. Are they being cultivated? What's being implemented? What's happening with money in wellness?

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, I have two ways to give you answers, really, because I have some very particular things I can talk about. I mean, I can simply talk about having provided \$100 million for water on reserves because that's a fundamental health issue. I could talk about that.

I can also talk about things like the Fort Chip human health and cancer action plan, where we're doing a full evaluation, as asked for by the community for many years. They never got that previously. We have this plan to lay out: what do we understand

about the cancer in the area and the rates? Are they increasing or not? There has been dispute, as you know, over a number of years, but those . . .

**Mr. Rodney:** Of course. But, Minister, if I can just jump in, I hear you, and I applaud that, but this often begs the question of the difference between health and wellness. Of course, they're connected. But what do you have that's not after the fact, as in the case of cancer, but things that keep people happy, healthy, out of the hospital, about healthy eating, active living, that are positive, proactive, and preventative, that increase quality of life while decreasing health care costs and taxes on the front end?

**Mr. Feehan:** Which is why I mentioned water. Which is why I mentioned in my speech . . .

**Mr. Rodney:** Yes. But what else? If there are good-news stories, I'd love to hear them.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah; \$120 million for off-reserve housing. I mean, housing has a fundamental relationship with wellness and with subsequent disease and so on. We know that. We just had a big increase there. A lot of our climate leadership money is going to improving housing on reserves by providing opportunities for ensuring better windows and doors and all of those kinds of things. We have actually multiple areas in which we've done things.

The other thing that I think is really important for us to talk about is the fact that through our signing protocol agreements, we have also established a process by which every treaty organization can sit down with the Health minister and with the other ministers, whether it be Seniors and Housing or even Culture, to talk about the kinds of things that are being done to improve wellness in the community. We've actually changed the underlying structure to ensure those conversations aren't just one-off. It's just not whether Richard shows up at the community and happens to have a community visit. They have a table where their professionals are meeting on a regular basis, the technicians, and then they bring the political-level people to set direction. That will be ongoing, long lasting beyond our government.

**Mr. Rodney:** I've said for years – and perhaps you'd agree, Minister – that it's intergenerational. It's intercultural. It's across the board. It's going to take a long time. I'm hoping that we keep moving this in the right direction.

You mentioned, Minister, a renewed relationship. As you know, I'm just a huge fan. It's the only way that's ever made any kind of sense to me. But something went off the rails recently with the situation with the Tsuut'ina, and the Springbank dam is a mess. Even just yesterday the comments from the Mayor of Calgary, with all great respect, muddied the water, if you'll pardon the pun. Could you clarify just from your perspective just for the record, because consultation and that's part of your ministry in the estimates, what has happened with respect to Springbank dam in terms of consultations? That's looking back, but also in the future what are your short-, medium-, and long-term goals with that? We've got to do the right thing there.

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, there are a couple of things I think I need to address, and some I can't because it, obviously, is being dealt with primarily from the Ministry of Transportation. It's their responsibility. One of the things I think that is really important is that you characterize it as having gone off the rails; I would say that that's a mischaracterization.

When we talk about having a renewed relationship with the communities, there's no pretense that somehow this is all going to

be sunshine and roses. A real relationship sometimes is very rocky, but that's a sign of a healthy relationship. You know, if I was working with a marital couple, I wouldn't say: if you never talk to each other and never have a disagreement, then you're happy. That would be a silly thing to say to a marital couple. So when I talk about the renewed relationship we have with First Nations, we don't anticipate that they won't disagree with us. We won't anticipate that they won't come forward and advocate for things that are important to them in terms of: we don't want you to put the Springbank in one particular place because we're worried about how it's going to affect part of our community and particularly houses that we intend to build and so on. Of course we anticipate them coming forward. In fact, we know we have a successful relationship because they are in a place of being able to say that they have opinions, and they know that we're going to respond to those. They're being bold, they're being upfront, and we are responding to all of that.

**Mr. Rodney:** But have you met with the chief, and will you meet with the chief again?

**Mr. Feehan:** Absolutely, we have met. I have met with the chief. The minister responsible has met with the chief on multiple occasions. Indeed, just last week we were both in Calgary.

**Mr. Rodney:** Have you met with the new chief?

**Mr. Feehan:** Yes. Lee and I have had a conversation. I think about a month ago he came to Edmonton. Just last week in Calgary I was down there at McDougall House, and so was Minister Mason, and Minister Mason was meeting with Chief Crowchild. Then we met together afterwards, had a conversation so that we were up to date.

**Mr. Rodney:** That goes perfectly with your business plan, which is to advise other government of Alberta ministries on indigenous issues and policies. Don't get me wrong, Mr. Chair. I'm encouraging you in asking. I mean, Tsuut'ina is a next-door neighbour to Calgary-Lougheed, and we need to do right by all Albertans: Tsuut'ina, Calgary, and the rest of the province, too. I know that you strive for a renewed relationship with indigenous Albertans. Before your time I'd suggested to the previous minister that they change the name to Indigenous Relations for a whole lot of reasons, and I appreciate that they did take that advice.

**10:20**

A couple of questions about this. Again, I'm not knocking it because I know how this works. You can't just jump in and act. Things need to be talked about and decided upon first. But the stage that it's at – I've heard it described this way, and it was written down for me – is that it's a certain set of agreements to develop some kind of platform to decide on how to plan in the future. Again, I'm not making fun, but, I guess, what kind of a timeline do we have going forward in terms of actual – because, I mean, Mr. Hanson had one of the same questions about the apology that could happen someday. I'll ask this question, so that would be a preamble. What are some tangible examples of various ministries' progress on developing and implementing programs and policies and practices in other ministries that support the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples? If we can point at specific things that actually have happened either last year, Mr. Chair, or this coming year, what are the intentions?

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, I think there are many things that I can speak to. I'll just start picking a few and going through them. For example, in the Ministry of Education they have committed to a renewal of the curriculum across this province, grade 1 to grade 12, over a

period of years. One of the pillars of that renewal is the inclusion of First Nations history, culture both before settler contact and subsequently, and that includes issues of oppression such as the residential schools, such as the '60 scoop and other issues, racism. All of that in its bare truth will be included in the curriculum at appropriate developmental levels and grades, and that's something that's never happened before in this province. That's the very first time, and that's a reflection of the United Nations declaration.

We've signed agreements, for example, with the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council to provide wraparound services, again, another one of these situations where in the past so much of the education on reserves has been viewed as being a federal jurisdictional issue. We have stepped forward and said: look, you know, these people live in Alberta; these people are Albertans although they don't like to have that defined in a way that excludes their treaty rights of being independent nations.

**Mr. Rodney:** Agreed and understood.

**Mr. Feehan:** And I agree with that. I'm just being cautious.

We've signed an agreement to step in to provide all kinds of wraparound services to Kee Tas Kee Now, and now that's been the model for discussions in a variety of other places. For example, we're very close to an MOU with the Maskwacis bands around education, so we've done that. We've included indigenous language programming now for kindergarten to grade 12 that will include both language and culture. We have the Alberta indigenous internship program, that allows 32 intern positions next year, an increase from the nine of last year that were bringing people in. We have, for example, changed the regulations regarding nonresident fees for public libraries that required people to pay in order to go into a library if they were a nonresident. We've changed that so that everyone living on-reserve can now go into a public library in this province without paying a fee, making that accessible.

**Mr. Rodney:** Those are great stories, Minister. I just wonder if it's possible – we don't need a written or verbal commitment, but what are your thoughts on perhaps updating the Legislature quarterly or every six months or every year on the success rate? I mean, as you might recall, there are – what are there? – 46 sets of recommendations for UNDRIP. Could you maybe share with all Albertans via the Legislature the gains that are made? Because that's a lot.

**Mr. Feehan:** We do. I mean, literally, I can tell you that I have a list of the things that are reflections of the United Nations declaration that took eight pages for us to type out. If I look particularly across ministries – because, you know, we have made the commitment that this is an all-government response. It isn't just about the Minister of Indigenous Relations changing his relationship. It's about every single ministry asking themselves the question: as we begin to do this piece of work that we're doing, how do we understand the relationship with the First Nations and whether it's going to influence or affect them in any way?

**Mr. Rodney:** Sure. And I think most people would understand that it's interministerial. In fact, some would argue it's completely across the board.

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, that is absolutely the intention. I think we have, you know, literally dozens and dozens of big successes, some of them with serious money like \$100 million for water, some of them smaller like the libraries, for example, and that was only just one small section I read to you. I could go through all the rest.

**Mr. Rodney:** No. I know. I'd love if we could have that in writing later. I'd be happy to share that with folks.

**Mr. Feehan:** In the ministerial annual report we will start to focus more carefully on those kind of things, articulating not only my own ministry but all of the other ministries' successes in this area.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you. I encourage that. You know, you've heard me say way too many times: stop blaming and start governing. This has nothing to do with any of that in that UNDRIP and TRC and fentanyl are new. They are in your lap now, and we want to support you.

Speaking of TRC, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations: as you know, there are many. Can you give us, either now or later in written form, Mr. Chair, tangible examples of your and other ministries' progress on developing and implementing programs, policies, and practices that support the TRC recommendations? What specific acts of reconciliation will you embark upon in this upcoming year related to these estimates?

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, as you know, we've already done many things, starting right away with the apology for the residential schools that was made by Premier Notley, one of our very first acts as a government.

**Mr. Rodney:** I pushed for that the week before. You remember that?

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm sorry?

**Mr. Rodney:** I pushed for it the week before. There wasn't anything in the throne speech . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm sure. I welcome you to keep our toes to the fire on these things.

**Mr. Rodney:** Well, we work together on these things.

**Mr. Feehan:** Exactly.

I think reconciliation has to be the keystone of our relationship moving forward. The TRC is a fabulous . . . [A timer sounded] Is that a stop?

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister. That's a full stop.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you. And we'll continue.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll now move on to the private members of the government caucus.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, I'm so happy to be here and to be a part of this session today. As everyone who knows me knows, I've been for the last 40 years working with indigenous people. I really applaud the work you've done. One of the things I learned – it takes a long time – is to be patient and to listen. If you're not listening, you're not learning, you're not finding out what anybody thinks or wants. That's the most important thing that you can do, and I think you have been doing that. That's great.

I'm going to switch courses completely here and move on to some questions about making indigenous climate leadership a priority in the government. Looking at key strategy 1.2 on page 89 of the business plan and looking at the estimates page 168, line 10, I see that the amount allocated to the climate leadership plan here in the budget for 2017-18 is almost \$6 million less than the 2016-17 forecast. I wonder if you could explain the difference, please.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. Thank you for pointing that out. Of course, looking at a single line, it does appear like there was a drop, but you have to look at this from an all-government perspective here. Last year our department was given a specific small set of money to initiate our programs such as the pilot program on solar, the pilot program on community energy audits. That money was indeed spent. In fact, it was oversubscribed. I am very pleased to say that those two programs provided somewhere in the neighbourhood of 23 different projects on 21 different reserves, opportunities to move forward on that, such success that we are now going to try to expand those programs in the future year.

Now, last year they gave us money to run the pilot project directly out of Indigenous Relations. In this coming year we actually have much more money, not just the \$6 million but rather \$41 million, that has been allocated for the indigenous climate leadership initiative. That money happens not to be sitting in my budget at this particular time; it's in the climate change leadership budget. But that is designated to Indigenous Relations, and we will be doing the work to have that money supplied. It's just not reflected in our budget because it's contained somewhere else.

I can tell you that over the next three years we anticipate that that particular expenditure on climate leadership will be about \$151 million. So there's plenty of opportunity for First Nations to come forward not only to do things like the solar or the audits, but we are anticipating that they will be able to provide all kinds of training for their citizens to be able to learn how to install and develop skill sets to start businesses that are in the green energy system and perhaps even build systems big enough to participate in the energy auction. I know I've had a number of chiefs and councils come to me with some very significant plans for solar farms, for wind farms, for biomass generation, for geothermal. We really anticipate that the First Nations communities will truly be a part of this movement toward a much greener, lower carbon based economy.

10:30

**Ms Woollard:** Okay. Great. Thank you, Minister.

I'm going to pass it over now to the Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Morning, Minister. It's great to be able to address the committee with some questions and concerns, certainly. When we look, Indigenous Relations initiated two pilot programs targeting indigenous communities, the Alberta indigenous community energy program and the Alberta indigenous solar program. The question is this. Were these programs successful, and if so, do you have the money to extend these programs in the 2017-18 budget?

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much. As I was indicating just a little bit earlier, the programs have been extremely successful. I realize I gave you misinformation. It was not 23 projects but 25 projects that were funded. Thank you for asking a bit more about that.

We also know that at the time that those 25 projects were funded in the pilot program, we also received approximately 40 additional proposals, so we know the demand is there in the community. As a result, our intentions with the \$41 million that are allotted to us this year would be in part to continue that program to allow the installation of solar panels or to do community energy audits in as many communities as possible. The goal, ultimately, of course, is that every First Nations community, every Métis settlement, and many of the buildings that are owned by friendship centres and the Métis Nation of Alberta and so on have had the opportunity to both conduct an audit and to install solar wherever that's possible. We look forward to it. This year is going to be an exciting year. Jumping

from essentially \$5 million to \$41 million is going to really be an exciting time for the community.

I can tell you that they are onboard. They are coming to me all the time. I just met recently with one of the Stoney chiefs, who was there already with the industry, who was prepared to work with him, sitting at the Legislature just the other day saying: "We want to build a solar field. We've got the land set aside, we've got the people who are willing to work with us, and we are looking forward to working with the government to both do the build and then to work with the electrical system afterwards."

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Well, thank you.

Again I'm looking at page 89, strategy 1.2, near the bottom of the page there. What I'm looking at is about the indigenous climate leadership initiative. I'm just wondering what steps your department is taking to ensure that the indigenous peoples across Alberta are included in this climate leadership initiative, as based on 1.2.

**Mr. Feehan:** We actually have quite a complex plan to ensure that the First Nations are included in this plan. As I mentioned a little bit earlier in our discussions, we are not only rolling out the dollars in order to do the actual projects, but we are working with the First Nations to establish a governance structure that will allow First Nations to be at the table at all times both in terms of design of the program and also the implementation of that program as it moves forward. That process has included meetings where I have gone and met with chiefs from across the province but also where we've had our staff go to every single nation and talk to the nations about their participation in climate leadership.

We have community workshops designed that will be going out across the community and people will be able to participate in. We're meeting very soon – in fact, I think it's later this month – with all the chiefs and councils to talk about that governance structure and to ensure that they have had a chance to bring themselves up to speed on the requirements that we have for the governance structure and for us to set out the priorities of moving forward. I can tell you that it's kind of a unique process. Government in the past has typically sort of taken some money, designed a program, done it all internally, and said: "No. We're going to make all the decisions. You just simply make an application, and you either make it or you don't. You're either in, or you're out the door." We instead have said: "You know, we're perhaps not the best people to decide exactly how climate leadership should be played out in the communities."

So we come to the table with the dollars that are available and the desire to work with the communities, to actually establish a place where they can make the determination around the rules and regulations and work with us to ensure that those dollars get out the door, not only at the chief and council level, by the way. I want to assure you that there are going to be multiple opportunities for nonpolitical people to be involved in the discussions, to get training about the installation of green energy systems, to create businesses in green energy, and to really participate fully in the economy, the green energy economy that we want them to participate in.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Well, thank you very much. We know that the government has been rolling out energy efficiency programs. I'm curious to know if indigenous peoples are eligible for the energy efficiency and other climate leadership programs, and I'm just wondering: where in the budget is this reflected in your current estimates?

[Mr. Hunter in the chair]

**Mr. Feehan:** As I indicated, the \$41 million, which will largely be used for all of the rollout, is not particularly reflected in this budget at this particular time. It sits with the climate leadership initiative. However, that money has been assigned to us, and we are doing the work of ensuring that that gets out the door.

With regard to the question of the no-charge energy efficiency program that you mentioned earlier, I can assure you that First Nations homes are equally eligible for the energy efficiency initiatives that were announced by the Minister of Environment and Parks some time ago. The retrofits that are happening in homes, the light bulbs and the thermostat systems and so on: all First Nations homes can apply for those retrofit systems, and they can learn about the other things that are possible for them. We anticipate that when we roll out the program of the \$41 million, we'll also have a variety of other ways in which they can engage in energy efficiency in the same way as the rest of Albertans are engaging in the no-cost energy efficiency programs.

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

I know that you've already covered a little bit about how you're engaging with indigenous people to address the partnership and that kind of thing. Do you have anything further that you want to add to that at all?

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, I think it's something that we should actually pay attention to because it's not simply that we have a nice, new program, which is of course wonderful and is going to help to clean up the air and the land and the water, which is something, I can tell you, that the First Nations communities have a very high interest in and are wanting us to work on, but also what we have done in this particular case is that we have really shared the responsibility for designing the system itself. So it's not just simply the dollars that come out the end that will actually build the solar panel; it's actually the sitting down and making decisions that I think is really important.

That's a transformation in relationship. That's saying to the indigenous community: "We want you here at step 1, not at step 6, where the dollars go out the door, but at step 1, where we begin to even think about: what are the priorities, what are the values on which we're basing all of this work? Are there ways in which you want to participate that are different than the ways that we would normally expect you to participate? Is there a mechanism that we can put into place that ensures that you don't just get sort of referenced to every once in a while in the process but, rather, that you never leave the table and you're always there? You have your representatives at every conversation. Your values and ideas are reflected in the processes that lead to the ultimate outcome and then, of course, that you are fully and truly participants in the ultimate outcome as citizens of this province and helping us to achieve the very significant goal of reducing carbon in our environment, taking care of our earth, air, and water and providing at the same time jobs and employment and economic possibilities for the people of this province, particularly, in this case, for the indigenous people of this province."

10:40

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Okay. This will be the last question I have regarding this topic. When looking at your budget, how much capacity funding is being put into this, and where in Budget 2017-18 would that amount fall under? Do you have a specific category?

[Loyola in the chair]

**Mr. Feehan:** It's a very important question because, of course, capacity funding is a big issue in the indigenous community. One

of the things that we're finding is that, you know, the more we want to include indigenous communities, the more is expected of them, then. If we set up a table where we're saying, "Come to the table and talk to us about things," they also need the capacity to be able to be at that table in the way that they need to be at that table. It's not simply showing up at the table, but it's also obtaining the reports they need, having their staff financed so that they can provide reports and information to their leaders, so that they can have internal processes at making decisions about what's important to them, and so on.

So capacity is an issue that we deal with regularly in this ministry, and as a result, we provide capacity in a variety of ways to indigenous communities. In fact, every year we've provided at-capacity funding, some core capacity funding to every First Nation. When it comes to individual programs such as this, we frequently provide capacity funding directly related to this program.

I seem to remember it was about \$10,000. Was it? I'm sorry. I'm just going to ask Donavon for a moment. Do you remember? John, how much money is provided for communities to participate in the governance structure process? [interjection] It's okay. I thought you might know. But it's part of the work that we do to ensure that they are at the table and that they have the resources.

In this case, for example, it's not simply enough to show up at a table and say: "Yeah. I want to do solar panels." How do you know what good solar panels are, and how do you know how to distribute that energy? All of that information, bringing them up to speed is part of what that \$41 million will be spent on.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Okay. I'll now turn it over to the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you. This really helps to give us a better understanding of what's happening, especially with the indigenous communities and the climate leadership plan.

I'm going to switch a little bit. I understand that the core function of the work being done by Indigenous Relations is the delivery of grant programs and that the funding of the aboriginal business investment fund was set to expire but that that's not now the case. On page 45 of the fiscal plan it says that \$5 million have been allocated to the aboriginal business investment fund for 2017-2018. Can you tell me why the program has been extended and how it's being rolled out as we go forward?

Thank you.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. Yes. We have found that the aboriginal business investment fund has been a very successful program and has really allowed the First Nations communities to do some things that are important for generations to come.

Not that long ago, for example, I was down at Blood Tribe, the Kainai, where they built a real grocery store on-reserve. They, of course, had some small stores, but what they were finding was that their community members would go to the store, sort of a convenience store level store, and then they would buy foods that were not good foods, but that was what was available. If you didn't go there, then you needed a vehicle to travel 45 minutes to a bigger city to arrive in a town that had a full grocery store. Instead, with the help of this fund and work with the government of Alberta, they were able to build a grocery store that is a full-fledged grocery store like you might find in Edmonton. As a result, people can now get fresh groceries by walking across the street, going maybe five or 10 minutes from their homes instead of 45 minutes. It's really creating a transformation for the community.

One of the other things that they indicated was that there are literally millions of dollars leaving the reserve community every

time people leave the community and head into town to spend money on those groceries. Now, because they own the grocery store, they're going to be able to build up their own economy. They will be able to take all of that money, the millions of dollars that are invested, and be able to use that profit from the grocery store to expand across a variety of other programs in the community. And I think that's a huge success.

I mean, I have a long list. You can see that they gave me a very long list of the programs. I won't go through every one with you, but I can tell you that we talked to reserves all across this province. We asked them all to participate. Whether it's the bulldozer program I talked about earlier up in the far north with the Beaver First Nation or it's the grocery store in the far south with the Blood Tribe, we're seeing First Nations communities taking on business with great alacrity, great success and planning for the future in a way that I think is going to be very exciting over the next number of years.

**Ms Woollard:** Oh, thank you. That's wonderful.

That just leads right into my next question. So we have clarified what the Alberta aboriginal business investment fund program does. But what other kinds of businesses would the ABIF support? If you could give us a few examples of the . . . [Ms Woollard's speaking time expired] That's it?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I just want to remind members that we're now moving to five minutes or 10 minutes combined with the minister.

I do want to acknowledge that we've had someone new join us at the table. Would you like to introduce yourself for the record, please?

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

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Hanson:** I'd just like to clarify. Is it five minutes total time or 10 minutes combined?

**The Chair:** If you were to do your own speech for five minutes, then the minister would have five minutes to respond, or you could do 10 minutes combined.

**Mr. Hanson:** We'll go back and forth, then.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Hanson:** I'd like to cede some of my time to my colleague Mr. Hunter.

**The Chair:** Sure. Sounds good.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Due to the time, Mr. Minister, if I could, I would like to just give you a statement about a meeting that I had with the chief and council in Kainai, just because they are in my riding.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay.

**Mr. Hunter:** I had the privilege of being able to meet with them. Rather than having you discuss this with me offline, that might be better, I think that they would like me to talk to you about this and make sure that this gets on the record. I had an opportunity to meet with them, as I told you. Unfortunately, the concerns that I heard from them were that they felt they were getting lip service on a lot of these things and that there was not concrete action being done.

Case in point, Mr. Minister, they have felt that the message has been loud and clear for some time now that they believe this fentanyl crisis, the opioid crisis, should have gone to a state of emergency, that that would have served their needs best. So I would like to pass that information on to you, Minister, that they feel like it is lip service. Yes, there are lots of things that you're doing, and I applaud you for that. But I heard loud and clear from them that this is their desired outcome, to be able to have this go to the next level, which would help their people so that they're not dying. I just wanted to be able to get on the record as saying that, that this is what they have said loud and clear to me as their MLA, and now I've been able to pass that on to you. Please, let's have an opportunity to be able to talk about this offline.

I'd like to cede the time back over to my colleague.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thanks, Grant.

Do you have any response to that, Minister?

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, you know, I have indeed talked to the Kainai people about this. Of course, they're concerned. I mean, how can I do other than to accept that the concern is increasing? It's there. It is dramatic. We are concerned about it, and we have been working.

There is an organization at Kainai that has been working particularly on this issue with our Ministry of Health. You know, that message has been clearly conveyed to the Ministry of Health, that they want to move forward on processes that are actually going to decrease the amount of fentanyl use and so on. We've discussed with them, for example, moving some of the opioid clinics from town back onto the reserve as a way of bringing it closer to home, and we are doing that. I know that there is some thought that declaring it a crisis will change things, but the declaration that it's a crisis does not give us any enhanced skills in order to be able to do what, in fact, we are doing.

**10:50**

You know, it doesn't mean that I'm not concerned about it. I want to meet with you offline. I want to have this conversation. I want to talk about what would actually give the community a sense that the things that they want to achieve are being achieved. I think much is being done, but it's not always experienced by the community that it's being done if they're not part of it in a way that makes sense to them or where they see a result. I guess, that's really what it comes down to.

I absolutely want to have this conversation, and I'm more than happy to ensure that the Minister of Health or the Associate Minister of Health is part of that conversation as well so that the people who need to be having the conversation are at the table and that the members of the Kainai are feeling like their concerns are being heard in an appropriate way, in a way that they recognize as being heard.

I thank you for bringing the message. It helps to remind us that we need to go back to the communities always and ensure that they're onboard with whatever it is we're doing. No matter how successful it is, it's not successful if the community doesn't feel like it's successful and it's moving forward. So I welcome the message.

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

I'd like to just, you know, jump in on that same topic and just point out some of the misconceptions that people have about fentanyl. It isn't just an injection drug user problem. I have a good friend that lost a 30-year-old son. He was a family man, not a drug user. This stuff is getting laced into simple things like ecstasy. So it's a bigger problem than just a street drug problem in the

downtown, inner cities. It's a crisis that covers the whole province and affects a lot of people, you know, the man that wrote that article. This friend is totally devastated. It's devastated her family. It is a big problem.

**Mr. Feehan:** There's no question that this is not just about indigenous communities.

**Mr. Hanson:** Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

**Mr. Feehan:** I know you're not saying that. We're talking about indigenous communities today, but this is a crisis that is in every community, people who you would not normally think would be involved in, you know, an incident of death or some other tragic incident because they don't tend to do drugs or anything of that nature. As you say, it's really widespread, and even a very small bit of fentanyl or carfentanil can kill people.

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah. I talked to an RCMP who was doing a search in a trunk of a car and got knocked to his knees just by some dust that he raised out of it. It's crazy. Anyway, we'll leave that subject for more debate in the House, probably.

I've only got a couple of minutes left here. I've been involved in this for a couple of years. We're looking at a \$192 million budget, and we're limited to two hours of debate on this issue. It's a small portfolio compared to the grand scheme of things in the budget.

But I'd just like to, you know, point out that when it comes to Indigenous Relations, it's more than just acknowledging that we're on Treaty 6 land. Your government has promised to do things differently. We're here now, two years into the program, and I look around the room. We're well represented by nationalities from all over the world, yet I don't see any indigenous people here. It kind of disappoints me. It disappointed me last year, and I think I brought it up last year. I have to bring it up again this year. I think that if we're really going to do something different, then we have to have them at the table and in your department and helping to make these decisions. I really think that's important, and I would implore you to attempt to change that.

I know that if I was in your position, having a couple of elders that would be advising would be a great thing. I think it would definitely change the colour of your day because I've met quite a few of them, and they can be some very colourful members and can have some great ideas. I'll tell you that it would make going to work a lot easier, having some of those guys around to help out. I think that they have some terrific insight. They've been around forever in this area. You know, we're talking not hundreds of years; we're talking thousands and thousands of years. I think somebody discovered some new evidence of indigenous people on the west coast from up to 14,000 years ago.

I think we need to recognize that and bring them in. You know, we talk about how Alberta is committed to reconciliation with indigenous people. In outcome 1 you say, "Indigenous communities and peoples can fully participate in Alberta's economy and society," yet we're not seeing that. I'd just like to point out again that we're over 30 people in this room, so we should have some representation. I think it's very important that we address that, and I would look forward to next year maybe seeing some change to that.

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, I can assure you that every year we hire many people in the ministry who are indigenous, First Nations, Métis, and even Inuit here in this province. Of course, in the minister's office we've had First Nations people as well work there. They tend to be

very skilled people. The last individual who was working in my ministry office was snapped up by the commission on missing and murdered indigenous women. So we now are in a place of replacing that person as an MA, you know, and I do hope that we're able to have an indigenous person again.

**Mr. Hanson:** You know, being that this is a scheduled two-hour meeting, even having some representatives from the community being invited to sit in would be great. It would be great to see them and in some way have their input afterwards on what their views are on what goes on here in these budget debates and where we're sitting. I think it's really important that we get some input. If we are committed to doing things differently, we need to really start. I think that's a good place to start.

That being said, I think we've got – what? – three minutes left here.

**The Chair:** You have 40 seconds.

**Mr. Hanson:** Then I'll pass off the remainder of my time to my colleague here.

**The Chair:** Okay. Please go ahead, Mr. Rodney.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you so much. As the chair may know, a couple of sessions ago I used the time that was remaining just to ask some questions, read them into the record. They were indeed answered, and I appreciate that the previous minister did that.

So I'll just read them into the record now. What are the tangible examples of various ministries' commitment to and progress on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls?

Question 2: how many more children have received services under Jordan's principle in 2016 than in the previous year, and what is the status of ensuring that children receive the same high-quality of care on-reserve as off-reserve?

What have been the impacts of the Daniels decision on your ministry's work last year, and what do you expect going forward? Last year you speculated about putting money into First Nations for health and, as we've discussed, hopefully, wellness. That was from *Hansard*, by the way, page RS-279. I'm just wondering if that indeed did happen and what the results were.

How many more indigenous students are there in Alberta's postsecondary education system this year compared to last year? How many more faculty? Is Athabasca University adequately supported? Of course, many of our indigenous students attend there, both from Alberta and Canada.

Key strategy 1.6 included supporting the development of a consolidated government of Alberta report on indigenous statistics. Of course, we're living in an age where we need to measure it in order to get support off, and that's difficult. But what's the progress on that? What performance measures or indicators in the business plan or other ministries' business plans reflect information drawn from that statistical resource?

Speaking of performance measures, the performance measurement framework – this is from *Hansard* RS-285 – you mentioned that your department was working to improve that, but it doesn't appear that there are any new performance measures or indicators in your business plan for this year. So I'm just wondering what happened to that new performance measurement framework. Will the public get to see that? Will you report publicly on the progress and the ability to hit performance measures, and what's the strategy to ensure that you do hit those performance measures? Again, this is coming from a place of if we can measure it, if we can prove it, then we can not only put the money towards it but

the action to make things better with and for our indigenous Albertans.

Now a couple of questions on the legislation. I'm just wondering what happened to last year's Bill 22, An Act to Provide for the Repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' Sacred Ceremonial Objects. What department and community resources were spent on the bill that failed? What policies and practices have been developed to address the problems or needs that Bill 22 was intended to address before it died on the Order Paper? And I'm wondering who asked for the bill to not be debated.

The next question is on the Aboriginal Consultation Levy Act. I'm wondering what the status is for replacement of that.

There is so much more. I care so much. I wish we had more time.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Members. We've reached the time allotted for this item of business, so it is concluded.

I would like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet next on April 18, 2017, at 9 a.m. to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance.

Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11 a.m.]



