



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Second Session

Standing Committee  
on  
Resource Stewardship

Ministry of Indigenous Relations  
Consideration of Main Estimates

Tuesday, March 3, 2020  
9 a.m.

Transcript No. 30-2-2

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 30th Legislature  
Second Session**

**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP), Chair  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP), Deputy Chair  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP),\* Acting Deputy Chair

Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
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\* substitution for Joe Ceci

\*\* substitution for Muhammad Yaseen

**Also in Attendance**

Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)

**Support Staff**

Shannon Dean	Clerk
Stephanie LeBlanc	Clerk Assistant and Senior Parliamentary Counsel
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## **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

### **Participants**

Ministry of Indigenous Relations

Hon. Rick D. Wilson, Minister

Donavon Young, Deputy Minister



9 a.m.

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

[Mr. Hanson 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 and welcome everyone. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

I'd ask that we go around the table and have all MLAs introduce themselves for the record, and, Minister, please introduce the officials that are joining you at the table. I'm David Hanson, the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul and chair of this committee. We'll continue, starting to my right.

**Mr. Loewen:** Todd Loewen, MLA, Central Peace-Notley.

**Mr. Smith:** Mark Smith, MLA, Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Getson:** Shane Getson, MLA, Lac St. Anne-Parkland.

**Ms Rosin:** Miranda Rosin, Banff-Kananaskis.

**Mr. Walker:** Jordan Walker, MLA, Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Singh:** Peter Singh, MLA, Calgary-East.

**Mr. Wilson:** I'm Rick Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations. I've got joining me Donavon Young, deputy minister, and Lisa Tchir, ADM, and, of course, Michael Lundquist, our senior financial officer.

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm Richard Feehan, MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. Sabir:** Irfan Sabir, MLA for Calgary-McCall.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Good morning. Lorne Dach, MLA for Edmonton-McClung and acting deputy chair.

**The Chair:** I was just about to say that, Mr. Dach.

I'd like to note the following substitutions for the record: Lorne Dach for Joe Ceci as deputy chair and Jordan Walker for Muhammad Yaseen.

Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* and that the committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Please set your phones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for the consideration of the main estimates. Standing Order 59.01(6) establishes the speaking rotation while the speaking time limits are set out in Standing Order 59.02(1). In brief, the minister or member of Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf will have 10 minutes to address the committee. At the conclusion of his comments we begin a 60-minute speaking block for the Official Opposition, followed by a 20-minute speaking block for the government caucus.

The rotation of speaking time will then alternate between the Official Opposition and the government caucus, with individual speaking times set to five minutes each, which, if combined with the minister's time, make a total 10-minute block. Discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not the speaking time is combined. Members are asked to advise the

chair at the beginning of their rotation 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 e-mail to either the chair or the committee clerk.

A total of three hours has been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations. The scheduled end time of this meeting is 12 p.m. With the concurrence of the committee I will call a five-minute break near the midpoint of the meeting; however, the three-hour clock will continue to run. Does anyone oppose taking a break? Seeing none, we will take a break.

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. Pages are available to deliver notes or other materials between the gallery and the table. Attendees in the gallery may not approach the table. Space permitting, opposition caucus staff may sit at the table to assist their members; however, members have priority to sit at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to three hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and the committee will adjourn. Points of order will be dealt with as they arise, and the meeting clock will continue to run; however, the timer for the speaking block will be paused.

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

The vote on the estimates and any amendments will occur in Committee of Supply on March 19, 2020. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are to be moved. The original amendment is to be deposited with the committee clerk, and 20 copies of the amendment must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

I now invite the Minister of Indigenous Relations to begin with his opening remarks. Sir, you have 10 minutes.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair and committee members. I'm pleased to be with you on Treaty 6 land, a land with which the Métis also share a deep connection. It seems like only moments ago we were here to discuss Indigenous Relations' spending limits for Budget 2019.

Joining me today are members of the ministry's senior leadership. I've already introduced those at the table with me. Behind me we have Cynthia Dunnigan, acting assistant deputy minister of First Nations and Métis relations; Kristina Midbo, director of indigenous women's initiatives; Olga Michailides, director of communications; Ted Bauer, my press secretary; Jeremy Wong, my ministerial assistant; and finally, Riley Braun, my chief of staff.

Although we're here to consider the estimates for Indigenous Relations, I want to take a few moments just to share with you the context of the work we're doing for indigenous people in Alberta. In our first 10 months we've already had two joint meetings with all the First Nation chiefs, members of cabinet, and the Premier. I'm sure we will hear about the Treaty 8 chiefs walking out at our last meeting, likely as some evidence that our government-to-government relationship is strained, and that is precisely why I want to talk about relationships before budget because our ministry is about working through issues that pull people to different sides.

Our government has made a fundamental and financial commitment to make life better for indigenous people. The only way to do this is in partnership toward a vision of shared prosperity, that a better way of doing things is to work around the structures that have held indigenous people back for far too long. This is why

we host meetings with indigenous leaders and take time to explore options for their communities.

When setting up the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, we hosted focus groups with leaders, and then we shaped a path forward with them. We are planning another meeting shortly with Treaty 8. When we announced the AIOC Act in October, Billy Morin, the grand chief of Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, said this about our work on the AIOC: when they said they were going to do it, they did it, and they didn't fidget around for three years making commitments to try to get it right; they just did it.

Ours is a relationship based on delivering the promises. We talk, promises made; then we act, promises kept. That is our approach to budget. Budget 2020 keeps us focused on job creation while growing the economy and controlling spending to be sure services are in place for the people who need them. The last government freely spent; this one will not. It takes a whole government working together to make a commitment like this come to pass, and this is how we're going to balance Alberta's budget by fiscal year 2022-23. By spending responsibly today, we can achieve better results for all Albertans now and into the future.

This includes indigenous people, who for too long have faced down extraordinary circumstances to keep their cultures, communities, and commercial prospects alive. With last week's news of a social media incident that involved racial overtones and remarks, it is clear there is much more work to do. The NDP likes to talk about their antiracism council and workshops they set up, but what exactly did that accomplish? Councils and round-tables are fine, but it's clear we need to do more, and we will.

From day one our government has worked toward real action on reconciliation to show that we are serious about partnering in prosperity, action that goes beyond small-grant funding. The reality is that indigenous people continue to be set back by outdated legislation and unnecessary red tape. These are factors that limit their ability to benefit like other communities do.

The Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, with \$10 million of operating funds to fuel it this year, is already starting to receive project proposals from indigenous communities. They will be looking for secure projects that return good value to communities, funds that councils can use to pay for their social and economic programs that their members need. Instead of throwing money at problems with no clear way to fund, hoping issues fix themselves, we are building the foundation for long-term success.

Grants through the indigenous litigation fund do the same thing. Ask the Woodland Cree First Nation chief, Isaac Laboucane-Avirom, whose community is the first in Alberta to get an indigenous litigation fund grant. He said: there is no work in our area, Peace River; there was a major oil project a few years ago that got cancelled due to lack of access to pipelines and lack of access to tidewater, so now, with no resource development in our areas, we're back into poverty. It's incomprehensible to me that anyone is going to tell an indigenous community what they need to do for their members. We will back those decisions with the remaining \$9.75 million in the litigation fund. More from Chief Laboucane-Avirom, who says: this is a very positive movement forward; we are here to work together and forge a friendship that benefits generations to come.

Meanwhile we continue to flow grants to First Nations through the First Nations development fund. We estimate the First Nations development fund grants increasing to \$135 million this year from just over \$123 million in fiscal year 2019-2020.

Not one thing about the funding formula or payments to First Nations has changed, and it's even more vital for indigenous communities, many of which experience mid- to high-double-digit

unemployment. We continue to strengthen communities by making sure people have a chance to find and get lasting, fulfilling, and meaningful jobs where money flows all around and not just to specialized off-reserve companies that do not invest in the communities they are contracted to. The employment partnership program funds direct training and employment supports, fosters industry partnerships to expand good employment opportunities for indigenous people, and supports employment-related events. We have nearly \$3.7 million available through Budget 2020 to connect indigenous people with good work.

#### 9:10

With the late date of Budget 2019 we were unable to advance the aboriginal business investment fund. I am happy to tell you we renewed this \$5 million fund for eligible indigenous entrepreneurs.

Creating the conditions for employment is fundamental to community well-being. So, too, is the need for social infrastructure. It's heartbreaking to know communities in Alberta still need safe and reliable drinking water in 2020. We continue to work to bring drinking water to reserve boundaries along with Alberta Transportation, the federal government, and First Nations involvement.

Speaking of capital projects, the Indigenous Relations budget for 2020 includes \$11.6 million of federal funding for the investing in Canada infrastructure program. We've endorsed eight indigenous applicants for funding, and our decision was based on oversubscription of the program.

Finally, my ministry is prioritizing work that creates opportunities for reconciliation. In September Premier Kenney, the three chiefs of the Blackfoot Confederacy, and I signed a protocol agreement that formalizes our government-to-government relationships. Our next signing is coming soon, and we continue to work toward our goal of establishing protocol agreements with all four treaty organizations and tribal councils. I value this chance to meet with indigenous leaders and other ministers of the Crown to talk about issues that matter. The budget for protocol agreements remains at \$1 million for this fiscal year.

While we work government to government towards understanding and progress, we know that critical work needs to happen among nonindigenous people. Part of that work comes from continuing to share the stories and accomplishments of our indigenous people in Alberta, which I do as a minister, an MLA, a parent, and a citizen. Through this first year of our mandate Premier Kenney has been outspoken in his belief that Alberta has a moral obligation to right the wrongs successive governments have laid at the feet of indigenous peoples. I've outlined that work we are doing to walk a path of economic reconciliation.

It is work we do also with the indigenous women's economic security councils. Physical, emotional, spiritual, and financial safety work together to create a more complete world view in which we can see through the lens indigenous women participate in. I have met with both councils and separately with the chairs, and I am so grateful for their wisdom, their lived experiences, and their advice. Indigenous Relations continues to work on indigenous women's initiatives, and to that end we are engaged in work to foster safer lives for indigenous women and girls. Core funding for the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women continues at \$100,000, with another \$15,000 for the annual Esquao awards, which highlight the accomplishments of extraordinary indigenous women across the province. But we need to go even further.

Participating in Sisters in Spirit Day events in both Calgary and Edmonton and talking with the people who have had loved ones taken from them deepens my commitments to take action. The rallies and chats during and after opened my eyes and reinforced

my resolve to work to make Alberta a safer place for our beautiful indigenous women and girls. The red dress, which is currently on display in the Federal Building for all Albertans to see, will be displayed afterwards in my office to remind me of that duty.

I'm planning an announcement with Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women Minister Aheer in the near future about Alberta's work on the calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I can't do this work by sharing words about how much indigenous women and girls matter. That's real work that needs to be done, and it takes a community of people who are willing to look around them to see how they can create acceptance while pushing back against the harmful ideas that put indigenous people at risk.

**The Chair:** Sorry to interrupt, Minister. Thank you very much.

For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. The timer will be set for 20-minute intervals so members are aware of the time.

Mr. Feehan, are you beginning, and would you like to go back and forth?

**Mr. Feehan:** I am beginning, and I would like to share the time with the minister, please.

**The Chair:** Okay. Minister, you're willing? Thank you, sir. Go ahead.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Minister. I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you today. I know that you do take this job seriously, and I want to acknowledge that. I appreciate why, having been in that chair once in my life. It's a very emotionally engaging ministry. I get that, and I think it's good that we bring our full selves to the work that's here. I also want to take a moment to thank all of your ministry for the work that comes, you know, throughout the year, of course, but I know that preparing for these estimates is always a stressful time, and it's a lot of work. I remember some fairly extensive binders, and I don't think I got through all of that in three years, but I appreciate that a lot of work has been done.

I anticipate, you know, an opportunity to ask lots of questions. I hear from your statements that you're worried about some cheap shots toward you, and I'll try to avoid that although I think my questions are pointed, and I'll take the shots you gave me on the chin and just leave it at that.

Overall, I'd like to start with just some general budget numbers. On page 130 of the Indigenous Relations budget the total estimate for 2020-2021 is \$221 million. I won't go through all the particular details. Can you find that? Do you need a moment? You're okay? Okay.

Now, we all understand that that involves some monies that are not actually put in by the provincial government, so if we take out the First Nations development fund money, which is actually just flow-through money from the lotteries and therefore is not actually money coming from the general coffers of the government of Alberta, and of course the Canada infrastructure dollars, which are actually federal dollars that come in, if we eliminate both of those from the \$221 million, we end up with \$74,838,000 in both upgrading and capital investment.

**Mr. Wilson:** What was the number you came up with?

**Mr. Feehan:** You get \$74,838,000 that the province of Alberta actually puts into the ministry if you total up both the operating and capital investments. I did the numbers, but I'm old fashioned, you know, and I did them by hand. I'm happy to share them. The point

is that that's the number of dollars we need to be talking about, that you actually have discretion over and that you'll be spending.

If we follow the same process for the 2019-2020 budget, we find that last year you would have ended up with \$75,357,000, so overall basically the budget from last year to this year is flat, a minor drop of less than 1 per cent in terms of actual province of Alberta dollars. I see that we've sort of maintained things on one level or another. We'll go through it step by step. I think I will probably ask you about almost every line in the budget today just for clarity.

But I want to take one more step back. On your chart you have the actual spent in 2018-19, which was the last year of the NDP government, of which I was a part. Total spending at that time was \$261 million and some change. Subtracting again, of course, the First Nations development fund and investing in Canada infrastructure dollars, we arrive at \$143,910,000, which means in the end that the budget that you have planned for your ministry this year is only 52 per cent of the budget of the last year of the NDP government. Is that correct?

**Mr. Wilson:** I can't rely on your numbers a hundred per cent, not that I don't trust you, but probably in the ballpark.

**Mr. Feehan:** Right. Well, I could share that. I guess I just want to start with that. I'm just a little confused because I know that in the House during question period the Premier is fond of saying that the overall reduction in the budget is somewhere in the neighbourhood of about 3 per cent. I just want to know if you want to take a moment to explain why indigenous people are absorbing a net loss that is seven times greater than the net loss endured in the overall budget.

**Mr. Wilson:** It's really easy to explain, actually. There was, you'll remember, the job-killing carbon tax. We eliminated that, so that accounts for about \$40 million, and a lot of that money was funnelled through.

**Mr. Feehan:** I assumed you would say that.

**Mr. Wilson:** The other big chunk of that is that there was a land settlement with the Lubicon, \$18 million. That's a one-time settlement. For those who don't understand, there was a treaty land entitlement, so a land settlement, and then there was a cash payment as well. Between those two, that's where the money basically came from.

9:20

**Mr. Feehan:** In noting your talking points about the carbon levy, which I always find a bit discouraging with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations given that it was the most successful program in Indigenous Relations in many years, with all 48 First Nations and all eight Métis settlements taking advantage of the program, that you would refer to it in a disparaging way, I guess I'll allow you to do that.

I notice that you did identify that if you talk about having removed that successful program, the drop isn't as much. I anticipated that, so I recalculated the numbers, removing that. It's still a 13 per cent drop, having removed the indigenous climate leadership initiative. The point is still the same. Why is it that the indigenous community is suffering a greater loss in budget than the average budget across all the ministries?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, we've purposely kept our spending for Health and Education. There was a conscious effort to make sure that we retained funding there, and that's for all Albertans. That's for indigenous people; that's for all the communities. So we made sure that that money was kept constant and actually increased in Health

spending over \$100 million. That money actually goes towards addictions and mental health. I've been working really closely with our Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. We've been doing a lot of good work there. Of course, a lot of that money is channelled back because, unfortunately, indigenous people find themselves in the situation that they need that. So although it looks like it went down, probably the spending overall is up for indigenous people just because of the extra spending in Health that we've been doing as well.

We're working on a lot of different projects right now. For example, at the Poundmaker's Lodge Treatment Centres we're actually doubling the capacity right now. This is a great program. I think it's about an extra 30 beds, and we're going to be doing 4,000 beds across the province. It's an amazing program.

In my area, of course, there's a large indigenous population as well. We actually put what they call a CRT, critical response team, in the hospital there just to deal with addictions and mental health. I met with the doctors last week, and they said that that's been an amazing program. That emergency ward in Wetaskiwin – I used to be on the health board there – was as busy as the University hospital. So to be able to . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** I'd just interrupt for a moment. What you're indicating, then, is that if there has been any gain for the indigenous community, it's not in your ministry. It's in other ministries such as health care.

**Mr. Wilson:** Health care and also in AIOC. You've probably heard me speak of that before.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. I appreciate your opening the door to discussion of other ministries as you've now talked about it for three minutes. So I appreciate the opportunity to do that.

I notice, to be fair, that not all the lines of the budget have gone down in the same way. Some of them, in fact, have increased. For example, section 1 of the budget on page 130, which is the minister's office, shows that your personal budget is up by 14 per cent over the fall budget. What is it? About four months since we were last here? I wonder if you can just explain why this particular section of the budget was prioritized as opposed to the 13 per cent drop in the rest of the budget.

**Mr. Wilson:** I think it's actually flat. Any increase there would have been to pay off severance from your staff, actually, from last time.

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm sorry. You're saying that it's flat?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. Exactly flat.

**Mr. Feehan:** So the move from \$2,685,000 to \$3,316,000 is flat?

**Mr. Wilson:** That's actually the strategic and corporate services line that you're looking at there.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. That's part of your budget.

**Mr. Wilson:** But that's not . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** You're right. I should read the numbers that are totalled. The total is \$4,248,000. That has moved up to \$4,879,000. That's flat?

**Mr. Wilson:** We've got a \$523,000 increase resulting from internal transfers of salaries and benefits from First Nations and Métis relations, consultations, land and policy programs to strategic and

corporate services as a result of internal reorganizations to streamline and better align program activities. There's a \$380,000 increase resulting from internally transferring back the budget used to support the 2019-2020 indigenous consultation and capacity program, a funding shortfall. Savings in 2019-2020 were achieved from vacant secondment positions.

**Mr. Feehan:** So you're suggesting that there has been a decrease in line 6.1 and that that's resulted in an increase in 1.3. Is that correct? You shifted money. That is what you're telling me. You've taken money from one of these services, which you're saying is the consultation services, and you've moved it into the ministry budget for strategic and corporate services. Is that correct?

**Mr. Wilson:** They've reorganized some staff in there. They've gone from three ADMs to two. The management level in Indigenous Relations was very high. It was almost 2 to 1, so I had to realign that to make it more realistic to what the real world is. Even at that, I think we're going to be shooting for 4 to 1 on management. We're decreasing management.

**Mr. Feehan:** You're telling me that you've essentially shifted that management from consultation to strategic and corporate services.

**Mr. Wilson:** We've realigned some staff; that is what has happened.

**Mr. Feehan:** All right. Okay. Can you just remind the committee a little bit of what the role of strategic and corporate services is?

**Mr. Wilson:** Give me a second.

**Mr. Feehan:** I can read the descriptor that is here, for example. It says that strategic and corporate services is "responsible for corporate functions such as business planning, annual reporting, enterprise risk management, performance measurement development and financial planning among others." Is that accurate?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, we've got the policy, which is the corporate policy, and that works across ministries with intergovernmental departments to incorporate the indigenous lens into government policies. We're trying to put that lens across all departments right now, so this also . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** So you're telling me . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** I wasn't actually quite finished.

**Mr. Feehan:** But I need to understand the piece that you've just reported. What you're saying, then, is that you've actually increased the personnel whose responsibility it is to work across ministries to ensure that services for indigenous people are well represented for government.

**Mr. Wilson:** There has been no increase in staff. We've realigned some staff internally, but . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** But the emphasis, the dollars that moved from consultation into the section of your budget: that emphasizes work across ministries.

**Mr. Wilson:** There's been no money moved; it's just a realignment of staff.

**Mr. Feehan:** So you're telling me that there's been no money moved, yet I'm seeing in the budget line that there's an increase of some \$500,000.



**Mr. Wilson:** That's just salaries.

**Mr. Feehan:** So you have no new people, but you are paying \$500,000 more in salary?

**Mr. Wilson:** I'm going to let the deputy . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** Sure.

**Mr. Young:** There were some staff in policy and corporate services that were in one division, and we moved them to another division. That's really why you're seeing the increase in staff dollars. Not a hiring of staff, not a greater expenditure; it's a realignment. When we moved from three ADMs to two, we took an opportunity to reorganize the department, and we shifted some folks who were reporting to, let's say, John Donner before and are now reporting to Lisa Tchir.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. I'll accept that. It's just curious that at a time of fiscal restraint the only thing that has really gone up in your budget is the minister's office and associated expenses.

**Mr. Wilson:** That's not actually the minister's office; the minister's office is flat.

**Mr. Feehan:** All things associated with the minister's office in strategic and corporate services; in other words, these are not services that are directed toward the First Nations and the Métis communities. Money doesn't flow there; it doesn't work on actually engaging with them. This is all for internal work.

**Mr. Wilson:** Correct.

**Mr. Feehan:** So the internal work has gone up; the external work has gone down. Thank you. I appreciate that.

**Mr. Wilson:** It's not an accurate reflection.

**Mr. Feehan:** Did you have something more?

**Mr. Wilson:** Would you like me to carry on?

**Mr. Feehan:** Sorry; I was waiting for you.

**Mr. Wilson:** Oh, I was waiting for you. We're very polite.

**Mr. Feehan:** You seemed to have something more you wanted to say.

**Mr. Wilson:** I could just talk about the budget a little bit more if you like.

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

9:30

**Mr. Wilson:** There is a funding increase in the budget, and the majority of, like you said, that \$12 million increase is projected revenues from the government-owned slot machines in First Nations casinos. That's the FNDF, of course, and the \$12 million increase in the federal funding provided to Indigenous Relations for investing in the Canada infrastructure program, ICIP, funds that support infrastructure projects that improve infrastructure in small, rural, and remote communities and projects that build strong communities and improve social inclusion. We also continue to invest in indigenous communities in meaningful ways.

Of course, the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation has been legislated to support indigenous investment in ownership in major resource development projects. Budget 2020 includes \$24

million over four years to support partnership in resource development projects.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. Thanks. We'll get to a lot of those things in time. I just wanted to have you help me understand a little bit. I don't have access to the information that you do. I get simply categorical numbers, and I need to ask what that represents.

I wonder if we might just move on a little bit to line 2, which is First Nations and Métis relations. Can you just take a moment to, again, explain to the committee what the role of the First Nations relations is?

**Mr. Wilson:** The assistant deputy minister's office, so Lisa, provides strategic direction to and co-ordinates activities for the following four branches: First Nations relations, aboriginal initiatives, Métis relations, and corporate and financial services. First Nations relations: that's building government-to-government relationships with First Nations, which are formalized through the protocol agreements, as you know. The protocol agreements commit the government of Alberta and First Nations to meet regularly to address matters of mutual concern.

The branch also provides advice and specialized knowledge to provincial and federal departments, municipal governments, industry and participates in crossministry strategies affecting First Nations people.

First Nations relations also administers the FNDF – that's the First Nations Development Fund – which supports First Nations economic, social, and community development projects.

The branch works with other ministries, the federal government, and industry to organizations and administers the aboriginal business investment fund.

**Mr. Feehan:** Great.

**Mr. Wilson:** Then on Métis relations: of course, it co-ordinates the province's relationships with the Métis Settlements General Council, the MSGC, and the Métis Nation of Alberta and administers Alberta's unique Métis settlements legislation.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. That's great.

In summary, then, as opposed to the strategic and corporate services, which is really internal and business planning, First Nations and Métis relations has a greater emphasis on – I'm just reading the line because it's quite a nice, short synthesis – “responsible for establishing effective relationships, legislation, [and] policies.” So it's the division of the ministry that actually works with the people that we are serving. Is that correct?

**Mr. Wilson:** That's correct.

**Mr. Feehan:** Let me just ask you again about the change in the budget here, and that is that it went from almost \$19 million down to \$15 million, approximately, again, representing a 21 per cent decrease. I wondered if you could just help me understand why the work that's actually done with indigenous people has decreased by 21 per cent while the internal work has increased by some 14 per cent.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. As you know, we have the long-term agreement with the Métis, so that's the \$3,814,000 planned reduction.

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm sorry. You've reduced the amount of money in the long-term agreement, the LTA?

**Mr. Wilson:** Maybe just address that.

**Mr. Young:** It was a planned reduction. The first seven years of the LTA was \$10 million a year, the last three are \$5 million a year, and we're now in year 8, so it was a planned reduction from 2013 to go from \$10 million down to \$5 million, and that represents the change almost completely. There is some elimination of staff vacancies, but it really is attributed to a planned reduction with the LTA. [A timer sounded]

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you.

I assume that's just the first 20 minutes?

**The Chair:** That's your first 20 minutes.

**Mr. Feehan:** Just while we're talking, then, about the LTA, I'm aware that it is on a schedule, and it is moving toward a decrease in dollars that flow from the government to the Métis Settlements General Council and therefore to all the eight Métis settlements. I'm just wondering if there is any plan or anywhere in this budget that you can point me to where you will be supporting these Métis settlements, or are they all just moving to having less money in their lives?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. We're not talking post-LTA; we're still talking this budget. We're working together on continued implementation of the long-term government's funding agreement over the next three years, and we're helping the MSGC and settlements advance their own communities. We actually just met with them last night. We had all the settlements in here. The province is committed to having trilateral discussions with the Metis Settlements General Council and the federal government on long-term financial sustainability of the Métis settlements. The Alberta government is also in the early stages of discussion with the Métis settlements to modernize the Metis Settlements Act, recognizing, of course, that it's a 30-year-old act. Since the LTA was signed in 2013, Indigenous Relations has provided \$70 million for the LTA's implementation and administration. There are ongoing discussions. We just made a commitment last night to keep those doors open and to look at the process. We'll be meeting with them quite a bit over the next while to discuss how we're going to be moving forward.

**Mr. Feehan:** Exactly what I wanted to know.

We know this is coming to an end. We know that the Métis settlements are not yet at a place where they have enough own-source income in order to be able to maintain the administrations that they have now without the LTA, so they simply are now in a place of \$5 million less to run their settlements. I'm just wondering if this budget represents any of the forward planning that will assist the communities once this present plan comes to an end?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, there are actually still three years left, so we've got time. We talked about that last night because they realize that the clock is ticking down as well. We still have also the future fund.

**Mr. Feehan:** I was just going to ask about that next.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. The money is still in the future fund, and some of that money was used this year to help out with some of the housing.

**Mr. Feehan:** Maybe you can just help me with some understanding of where the future fund is at now. My remembrance is that the future fund was such that if they continued to remove monies from the future fund at the rate that they chose to remove funding, they would also be gone in approximately three years, so their future fund is diminishing to the point of zero and their LTA dollars are diminishing to the point of zero. Is that correct?

**Mr. Wilson:** That's really up to them. I don't administer that, so they can draw it down.

**Mr. Feehan:** I understand. I'm not blaming you for taking the money away. I'm saying that the state of affairs is that there are two primary sources of funding.

**Mr. Wilson:** It's their money. There's about \$40 million, I believe, approximately, plus or minus in there.

**Mr. Feehan:** Right. Which is enough to approximately last for another three years at the rate they're finding a need to take it out.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, it depends what happens, too, because they're also eligible for the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation. I know they're looking at several projects right now, and, with any luck, we'll get them on stream with some of these projects and they'll be able to recapture some good . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** So we're hoping that some fantastic economic development opportunities suddenly open up for them to be able to survive.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, I know there are some opening up. I've seen some of the projects coming forward, and they are involved in them, and it's not small money we're talking. You know, the minimum investment is \$20 million. These are big projects coming forward.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. I appreciate that. So the ministry itself is not actually helping to plan for success. You're simply hoping that the . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** We're very helping them. We're helping with the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, and they have access to our capacity funding there. There is \$6 million a year that's set aside. Some First Nations and Métis settlements have the capacity to take on big projects, and some aren't used to those bigger projects; they're used to farming projects or forestry, that type of thing. We've given them that extra capacity. They can come in with a business plan. We'll help them build their business plan to take on these bigger projects because we want them to succeed. This is about succeeding; it's not about . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** Certainly. We all do, so let's hope that something lucky comes along.

**Mr. Wilson:** It's not just luck. I mean, I found like people have said about me or my life: you're very lucky. I was surprised that the harder I worked, the luckier I got. That's what it's all about: it's hard work.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that.

While we're talking about First Nations and Métis relations, I just have a number of programs I want to ask about and see where their funding is at just so I have some understanding. I tried to take a few notes while you were talking earlier about some of them, but I'll ask. One of them is: I can't tell from reading this, but there was, of course, at one time an internship program in which First Nations and Métis individuals were brought into the department to work. At one time it was five members, and in the fall budget you indicated that you were reducing that to zero. Because I can't tell, I just need to ask you: is the internship program still at zero dollars, or are you hoping to increase that at some point?

9:40

**Mr. Wilson:** That program is on hold.

**Mr. Feehan:** So that program is at zero dollars. Thank you.

In the previous budget, the last time we were together, I was asking about the solar panel initiatives projects. You weren't able to answer the question at the time, but I did receive your answers to my questions. They identified that previously there had been 56 solar panel projects across First Nations and Métis communities. I'm wondering, because that information was not supplied in the response, whether or not you can give any sense about what savings will be derived from the communities from having these solar panels in existence?

**Mr. Wilson:** No. We don't track their funding, as to what their savings are, and what the costs are for operating it because there are staffing costs as well. The bottom line: I don't know if it's breaking even or if they're making money or saving money.

**Mr. Feehan:** So are you suggesting . . .

**Mr. Loewen:** Point of order.

**Mr. Feehan:** Point of order?

**Mr. Loewen:** The member is asking questions. I just want a clarification of what line item he's referring to in the budget.

**Mr. Feehan:** I have said that all of these questions are in line item 2, work that has previously been done under First Nations and Métis relations.

**Mr. Loewen:** Previously done or currently done?

**Mr. Feehan:** That's what I have to ask.

**Mr. Loewen:** Where does it relate to in this budget?

**Mr. Feehan:** You'll notice that every single one of my questions is: is this program in existence? Because I can't tell without asking.

**The Chair:** Minister, feel free to answer the questions if you have the information. If not . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** All I can tell you is that the climate leadership programs were successfully completed.

**Mr. Feehan:** Right. Going forward . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** We don't track the operations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Right. We know it was highly taken up, and it's moved from 56 projects to zero projects under this administration. In this program there is no attempt to follow that up or to create a new – I know you don't have the climate leadership initiative. What I'm asking is: is there anything else in the system that would allow them to continue to do the work that they want?

**Mr. Wilson:** Absolutely. On a bigger scale. Those were pretty small-scale projects we were talking about. What we're looking at is through the AIOC. That is not just oil and gas. It also includes forestry, mining, and renewables. Renewables, of course, can be anything from – I've seen some amazing geothermal projects coming forward. There are some solar projects.

I was just down at Piikani nation, and we were looking at some issues along the Oldman River there. I was looking around, and I said, "How far does your land go out here?" Chief Grier says to me, "Well, you see all those windmills?" I say, "Oh, those are all yours?" He says: "No. That's where they end." There are none on their land. The windmills are all around them. They always tell me

down there that they don't have oil and gas, but they've got wind and water. They've got the ability to participate in the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation and get into some large-scale energy production that could create some long-term funding for them.

**Mr. Feehan:** I think that's great. We were able to create similar projects with our renewable energy program that helped build the electrical grid. Of course, as you know, nations in Treaty 6, 7, and 8 all got those contracts. I assure you, our side of the House is hoping that there will be some projects coming out of the Alberta indigenous opportunities program.

To date, though – I'll ask it again the next time, so you can change your answer – I assume there are zero programs that have actually been funded from that.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, the board was just put in place, so the board is up and running now. We have an interim CEO.

**Mr. Feehan:** I'll take note that the answer is zero for today, and I will ask it again at next estimates so you can update us if there is any change between now and the next estimates.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, I was going to tell you that there are actually over 17 projects that they're reviewing at this point.

**Mr. Feehan:** Nothing has been funded, though.

**Mr. Wilson:** We want to make sure that they're viable projects. I don't want to have some half-baked schemes out there. Also, I should maybe just bring up that through the aboriginal business investment fund, that's still available to them if they want to do a smaller type of solar project. That money is still available.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. So they could still carry on with that if they like.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. Thanks. I appreciate that.

I wanted to just ask about the aboriginal and native friendship centres across the province. We know that there are 21 of them in communities throughout the province. Most of them, of course, are rural or in smaller communities. There's certainly one in Edmonton and one in Calgary, but . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** And Lethbridge. A big one in Lethbridge.

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

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. High Level. High Level thinks they're a big town, so there's a big one there.

**Mr. Feehan:** Of the 21 eighteen of them are in small communities or areas, and . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** Don't tell High Level they're small.

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm just wondering if you can tell me in this budget on line 2 whether or not there's any funding of it being made available for the native friendship centres.

**Mr. Wilson:** Actually, I just signed off, like, literally two days ago or three days ago on close to a million dollars. I think it was around \$800,000. I can give you that exact number, but a big chunk of money is going to them. I find the friendship centres very valuable. I got this red dress from the High Level friendship centre when I was up there. They do a lot of work. Just for everybody else, when

people come into the small towns and cities – they could come from across Canada – and they maybe don't have the contacts of . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** You know that I support them, Minister. I agree with your comments that they are very valuable, and that's why I'm asking the questions.

**Mr. Wilson:** If we could just carry on with that just a little bit.

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, no because it's just storytelling, and I have some questions I have to ask.

**Mr. Wilson:** But my friends like my stories.

**Mr. Feehan:** What you're telling me, then, is that you've signed off on something like a million dollars? Is that in this budget somewhere?

**Mr. Wilson:** Seven hundred and twenty thousand dollars was the exact number.

**Mr. Feehan:** So \$720,000. Where does that get represented in this budget? Where would I find that?

**Mr. Wilson:** Line 2.

**Mr. Feehan:** Oh, so it is. I have the right area. Okay. That's great. What has happened, though, is that the ongoing, continuous funding is gone and reduced to zero, and this one-time funding of \$720,000 is included. Is that correct?

**Mr. Wilson:** I'm not sure where you're getting that information from.

**Mr. Feehan:** In previous years in this budget there was money allocated to the friendship centres on an annual basis.

**Mr. Wilson:** It still is.

**Mr. Feehan:** Oh, so what you're telling me is that this \$720,000 is that same dollars continued forward. Is that correct?

**Mr. Wilson:** Correct.

**Mr. Feehan:** Ah. Okay. Great. Thank you.

**Mr. Wilson:** Like I said, they do a great job out there. I really appreciate them. I've been to, I think, just about every one of them. When people come in from other areas, like I was saying, they don't know where to go in that city, so they're a valuable resource because then they can show them where they can access, even to get training and that type of thing. We do a lot of projects like with NorQuest . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** I agree about their importance, Minister. I want you to understand that the reason why I ask the question is because when I asked for what changes have been made in the last budget and your ministry sent me the information back, it was indicated that all of the urban indigenous initiatives were eliminated. I asked for a list of what those would be, and the friendship centres funding was on that list. The information you provided to me a month ago indicated that the funding was not there, so I need to ask for it.

**Mr. Wilson:** Maybe you just didn't read it correctly.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. Well, good. I'm glad I'm asking. I'm happy to know it's there. I support you. How's that?

**Mr. Wilson:** Okay. Perfect. We'll have to agree to agree.

**Mr. Feehan:** I guess so. I'll go back to the document that I received just a few months ago, though, that indicated that that funding was eliminated. At the break I will find it to demonstrate.

**Mr. Loewen:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** Point of order noted.

**Mr. Loewen:** I guess I'll speak to 23(b)(i), "speaks to matters other than the question under discussion." He's talking about a document from the past, and we're looking at the estimates of the present.

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm talking about the answers to the estimate questions of last fall.

**Mr. Loewen:** We're talking about estimates from the business plan that we have in front of us here. If you're talking about last year, you need to go back to last year and discuss it, I guess, but this is estimates of this business plan going forward and these estimates going forward. If you want to talk about last year, then go back to last year and talk about last year.

**Mr. Feehan:** Can I respond?

**The Chair:** Go ahead and respond, sir.

**Mr. Feehan:** If I learn from last fall's estimates that a program has been eliminated because I've been sent a document from the ministry saying that it has been eliminated, I cannot ask about whether that program exists in this estimates?

**Mr. Loewen:** Go ahead and ask it. Don't talk about last year's documents. We're not talking about last year's documents. We're talking about this year's documents.

**Mr. Feehan:** I think he's trying to eat up my time, Mr. Chair.

9:50

**The Chair:** If you're going to ask a point of order, you get one opportunity to state your case. Then the opposition member in question gets an opportunity to state his case. It's not a back and forth between the two members, okay? It comes through the chair. I think that in this case the question is relevant. The minister can answer the question or not. That's up to his judgment.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. You've answered the question, and I was just trying to explain why it was a question for me given the document that I had previously received.

**Mr. Wilson:** Actually, we found your questions and comments, and that's not in there, actually.

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

**Mr. Wilson:** I think you just misunderstood the way the information . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** That's why I'm asking, for clarity. All of my questions are for my knowledge, to enhance my understanding.

**Mr. Wilson:** That's great. We always have to grow.

**Mr. Feehan:** Exactly. Thank you.

Again, maybe these will be fairly quick given what you've just told me here, but I just want to ask about some of the other ones; for example, the Bent Arrow program receiving the new in town

program. In the last estimates my understanding is that that money was eliminated. Is that true, or am I to understand that that is still in line 2 of this budget?

**Mr. Wilson:** You know what? I was just at Bent Arrow about two weeks ago. I went through their whole program. They're doing some amazing stuff there.

**Mr. Feehan:** They certainly are.

**Mr. Wilson:** People come out of prison or what have you and get integrated back into the community so that they can help them there, and I think that their success rate was amazing. Like, there are dollars to be saved there by looking into those programs.

**Mr. Feehan:** I agree. So are you continuing their funding?

**Mr. Wilson:** You know what? I found that there is some discretionary funding to help on a priority basis, so that's maybe something I might consider. I'm also working with other ministries . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** So the answer is that in terms of this budget under line 2 there are zero dollars for them at present, but you are hoping to find some dollars.

**Mr. Wilson:** No. I didn't say that. I have found some dollars. There is discretionary funding. It may be used for that; it may be used for other things. It's on a priority basis, and I want to put the money where I can get the best bang for our buck.

**Mr. Feehan:** So I should just put that on the record for asking you next time to see if indeed the funding actually was found.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. There's been no application or anything come in at this point.

**Mr. Feehan:** I'll ask at the next estimates so that you can update me, but at present it's zero – I get it – and then hopefully it changes. I support if it changes.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, there could be some money through other departments as well that help with Bent Arrow.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay.

**Mr. Wilson:** It depends. It might come from someplace else. Then I don't need to help them. Like I said, they do do a great job over there. Me and my press secretary spent the better part of an afternoon there to check it out.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. I know. I've been there many times before I got into politics.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. They showed us around, and they did a really good job. I was really impressed because I had never heard of it before, so to go through it and see what they are doing . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** It's a good program.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. They had a full teepee set up on the stage, and then they were putting shrubbery around. It actually felt like you were outside. It was really quite an interesting experience.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Minister. You mentioned in your statement earlier that there was still some funding for the IAAW, the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women. Can you

tell me which parts of the funding have been maintained and which parts have been eliminated?

**Mr. Wilson:** I've actually increased it from where your budget was.

**Mr. Feehan:** For which part?

**Mr. Wilson:** All of it.

**Mr. Feehan:** There were two sets of funding. One of them was specifically directed toward the Esquao awards event, and the other was core funding for the IAAW, which, I believe, was approximately – I'm trying to remember all of these things from over a year ago – \$100 million. A hundred thousand dollars, sorry; I wish it was a million. Both of those pieces of funding are contained on line 2?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. Actually, one of the first events I went to when I got on was the Esquao awards. It was really fascinating to see, to honour the women. I really felt strongly that I wanted to . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** Can you tell me how much you've increased their funding? What percentage or what number?

**Mr. Wilson:** I've actually maintained it.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. So the Esquao awards is exactly the same, so it's maintained, no changes up or down.

**Mr. Wilson:** That's correct.

**Mr. Feehan:** That's great. The other part is the core funding, which I believe – and you can correct me if I'm wrong, Donavon – was \$100,000 a year.

**Mr. Wilson:** You're bang on, and we've maintained that one as well.

**Mr. Feehan:** That's been maintained?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. Both are really good projects. I like working with the people there. They're good people with good hearts.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. I'm delighted to hear that some of the information from the last estimates has been altered since we had the conversations.

Let me ask you about the Calgary Métis child and family services. They as well were indicated to be on the list of programs to be reduced. Can you tell me if, in fact, they are reduced, or are they in line 2 of this budget?

**Mr. Wilson:** Do you have any more information on that? What did you call it?

**Mr. Feehan:** The Calgary Métis child and family services.

**Mr. Wilson:** Are you talking about Children's Services?

**Mr. Feehan:** No. I'm talking about the – I've given you the name, so I'm not quite sure how to rephrase that. They have received money.

**Mr. Wilson:** I'm thinking that maybe that came through a different department, possibly.

**Mr. Feehan:** No. It came under the – what is it called, now? – the urban indigenous programming dollars.

**Mr. Wilson:** I'm just chatting with the deputy here, and he doesn't recall that program.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. I will check my notes.

**Mr. Wilson:** You have to check your notes. It may be through a different department that you were thinking, possibly, sir.

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, I don't have access to the same information you do, so sometimes I have to work on other bits of information, but I will check on that and see if there's something perhaps the department can follow up with me on that.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. I don't recall hearing that one to be honest with you.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. Can I also ask about Native Counselling Services, again, urban indigenous? I'm asking these because in the last estimates you indicated to me that all of the urban indigenous funding was removed, and this is my only way to check to see if it's removed or if it's buried in line 2. I have no other way of discovering this. Again, I think that the letter – I think you found the letter, so you know what I'm referring to – indicates that the urban programming, which you told me in the last estimates was eliminated completely, involved native counselling of Alberta. I want to know: are you funding native counselling of Alberta in line 2 or not?

**Mr. Wilson:** I don't have any dedicated funding there, but I do have my discretionary funding. We haven't received an application either, so it's something we can look at, but at this point there is no funding going into it.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. So at this point it's zero, but, you know, there's always a hope. Is that what you're . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** I haven't received an application. I've put some money aside, like I said, in my discretionary funding. If there's something really important that comes up, we can squeeze some dollars out to help somebody.

**Mr. Feehan:** That money was ongoing is the past, was it not? Was the money . . .

**The Chair:** That's your second 20 minutes. You have 20 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Feehan:** I have 20 minutes remaining. Okay.  
That money was ongoing in the past, was it not?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, nothing is really ongoing in the budget. It's all fluid.

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, I understand the nature of budgeting. I just mean that that money was in year over year . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** It isn't earmarked this year specifically for that, but I do have discretionary funding.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. So I can just mark it a zero for now, but I'll ask again in the future because it sounds like you may find some dollars for them.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, if they ask for it. They haven't even asked at this point so, I mean . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. Well, let me go on, continuing with this list. The Red Deer Urban Aboriginal Voices program was also part of

that, another great program. I hope that you have an opportunity to go and visit them. Are there any dollars in line 2 for the Red Deer Urban Aboriginal Voices program?

**Mr. Wilson:** Same as the previous question. They haven't put in an application. We haven't received anything, but we do have some discretionary funding that is a possibility. Like I say, we're going to prioritize those on who needs funding the most.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. That's a zero for now. I'm not sure I should go through all of these things, but I might ask one more, and that's the Calgary Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth, a great program, which I had an opportunity to visit, helping youth transition from high school into postsecondary and other kinds of situations. Is that funding being maintained in line 2 of this budget?

**Mr. Wilson:** Again, we haven't received any application, so it's something that'll be looked at under our discretionary funding.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. I'll just mark that as zero for now. Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to ask some of those questions.

Now, a couple of other things that I am concerned about. Because it seems that a lot of programs here are zero – I have about eight of them in front of me right now – I just want to ask about which programs maybe have survived. One that I'm not even sure where to ask this now because you no longer have a climate leadership initiative, but there was money for Paul band's coal transition, funds that were in the budget previously. My question is: is there somewhere you can direct me in this budget to identify whether or not Paul band is receiving any monies to assist them with the coal transition?

**Mr. Wilson:** The coal workforce transition program is available through the Department of Labour and Immigration to support the transition of eligible employees at the facilities affected by the phase-out of coal generation. There is no unique coal phase-out support program developed specifically for Paul band members. Members of the Paul band or any other band working at those plants or mines are eligible for these supports subject to the regular program eligibility requirements. The program continues with a \$4.7 million allocation in Labour and Immigration for 2019-20 and \$7 million in '20-21; also, \$11 million in '20-21, and \$8 million in '22-23. There is no unique coal phase-out support program developed specifically for the Paul band members, but they are all eligible for all of these.

**10:00**

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay.

**Mr. Wilson:** So there is a lot of money set aside for them.

**Mr. Feehan:** I appreciate that answer.

Minister, the next line in your budget, line 3, is the indigenous women's initiatives. I've already asked about the minor part of that, which is the internship program, and you've already indicated that that has been put on hold. So that is one of the zeros on my list. But the last time we spoke, you indicated that you were increasing money – and I can see by the budget that, in fact, that happened – for the indigenous women's initiatives. Because of the very important work of responding to the need to respond to the inquiry on murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, which everyone agrees is fundamentally important, I guess what I'm wondering now is that there seems to be just a minor adjustment, a change to that, and I accept that. I'm not asking about the dollars. I'm a little bit more interested, then, about: can you tell me – I want to give you a moment to brag, I guess – what has come out of the

work on murdered and missing indigenous women and girls? Can you tell me where you're at? Will there be a report that's issued? Just help me be excited about where you're going with this.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thanks for the opportunity to do that. I appreciate that. As you know, we've increased it just about \$200,000 from when you were in charge of the department there. So we're up about \$200,000 there, and we've already taken some action. We have identified a plan to combat human trafficking. As you know, we enacted a version of Clare's law so that Alberta is a safer province, where indigenous women are protected and treated with dignity.

Indigenous people need to be at the heart of any actions we take in response to the national inquiry's calls for justice. So Indigenous Relations, Justice, and community services gathered input from key indigenous organizations and individuals working on violence prevention. Of course, there's a national inquiry crossministry working group to inform Alberta's next steps. This year we declared Sisters in Spirit Day – you were part of that as well – to raise awareness about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and to ask all Albertans to take a stand against violence towards indigenous women and girls.

In the Federal Building you see the red dress displayed down there, of course, a symbol of missing indigenous girls. After it's done displaying there, I'm going to display it in my office, just to keep it as a reminder of what's going on there.

**Mr. Feehan:** Will there be a report on Alberta's response to the murdered and missing indigenous women inquiry calls for justice?

**Mr. Wilson:** I'm excited to tell you that very soon – very soon – there will be a ministerial committee to help me put a project together, so we'll be announcing that. Stay tuned. You'll see something coming out very soon on that.

**Mr. Feehan:** So we can anticipate that Alberta actually is constructing a response to the calls for justice from the murdered and missing inquiry and that that will become publicly available sometime in the future?

**Mr. Wilson:** That's probably going to be my main focus going forward here for a little while. You're going to see. Actually, Minister Carolyn Bennett stopped in to see me two or three weeks ago because she'd heard of the work that we were doing here. I was very excited to tell her some of the things that we're doing, and we brought her over and showed her the red dress display there. She actually was very impressed with the work that we're doing there and is looking at taking some of that to the national level. So I was very proud of that, that we got recognition at that level already.

**Mr. Feehan:** All right. I'm trying to give you room to brag on this because this is so important.

**Mr. Wilson:** Excellent.

**Mr. Feehan:** I absolutely do not want us to be partisan on this.

**Mr. Wilson:** Good.

**Mr. Feehan:** I will support whatever you do to move this forward. At worst, I will be mad at you if I don't see any movement forward, and I'm hearing that there's some, so I will celebrate it when I see it.

**Mr. Wilson:** I appreciate you always wearing the moose hide patch for people like that.

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, as you know, my career before I got elected was in the area of family violence ...

**Mr. Wilson:** Exactly.

**Mr. Feehan:** ... so it's near and dear to me as well. But thank you. I appreciate that, Minister.

**Mr. Wilson:** We promote – like, you see that all of our staff wear that, too. For those that don't know, we've given them out before, but that's so people remember that we have to stand up against violence towards indigenous women.

**Mr. Feehan:** It's one of the best conversation starters I have at parties.

**Mr. Wilson:** It is. That's why I always wear the dress. People say: what's that? So it gives you the opportunity to talk about the red dress movement and sisters in spirit.

**Mr. Feehan:** Although the Blackfoot chiefs still refer to it as my shredded wheat square.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, that's true, yeah.

**Mr. Feehan:** I wonder if I could move us down to section 6 of the budget, consultation, land, and policy. I see that there are some decreases in a few areas, that I won't particularly go into because I don't think they're that significant. However, the strategic engagement and policy innovation branch has been reduced by approximately 60 per cent. Can you just walk me through why there's a significant drop in strategic engagement and policy innovation?

**Mr. Wilson:** I believe you're talking about the consultation?

**Mr. Feehan:** Line 6.3, strategic engagement and policy innovation, has gone from the actual spent last year of \$19 million down to \$9 million in this budget. That's such a significant drop. There must be some significant changes you're making.

**Mr. Wilson:** I have an amazing answer for you.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay.

**Mr. Wilson:** We followed through on our commitment to fund the indigenous consultation capacity program, and at this point we can commit to the fulfillment of that program for 2019-20. There were deliverables, because, as you know, there was a huge increase from one year to the next under that consultation.

**Mr. Feehan:** I know. I did it.

**Mr. Wilson:** I know. Thanks for that.

So we followed through on the commitment to do that. We honoured that commitment. We fully funded that program. We visited many communities in just the last six months. We know the importance of consultation but also know that the majority of indigenous people want responsible resource development lines. A lot of the First Nations have very poor development, and it helps them with their issues. If helps for addictions.

**Mr. Feehan:** So am I hearing in this why you suddenly lost, well, as I say, approximately 60 per cent of the budget of line 6.3? You're telling me that you continue to fund it and that you're ongoing, yet the budget says ...

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, the base funding that was in place when you were minister: I've kept that intact, and this year it remains at that exact same level.

**Mr. Feehan:** Right. So why did we lose 60 per cent?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, that was based on deliverables, and we fulfilled that. They met the deliverables. I don't believe you ever meant that to be an ongoing program. The base funding is intact, as always. We've had to make some difficult decisions because of the massive debt that you left us in.

**Mr. Feehan:** So some of the funding for consultation was not ongoing, was only a one-time deliverable?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, that's the way the program was. It was set up that they had to meet deliverables to get that consultation money. If they didn't meet those deliverables, they wouldn't even have gotten that money.

**Mr. Feehan:** I understand that, but my understanding at the time was that the intent was that they would be receiving these consultation monies ongoing, that this was to run their consultation offices. There was no one-time effect on that.

**Mr. Wilson:** It was to build capacity in the consultation offices. It's not sustainable to keep it at that level. I mean, that was a fourfold increase in one year.

**Mr. Feehan:** So that means every band has had approximately a 60 per cent decrease in the amount of monies they have available for consultation?

**Mr. Wilson:** On that program. But the base program remains exactly the same.

**Mr. Feehan:** So for the base program, when I was in the chair, we increased the base funding.

**Mr. Wilson:** That money is staying exactly the same. The base funding is exactly the same.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. I think I'm going to need to ask that the ministry send me information regarding how much money was going to each of the nations for base funding, how much of it you considered to be temporary funding, which I didn't. I'm confused here.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, the 2019 year: the base funding this year is exactly the same as it was then.

**Mr. Feehan:** But in the last year that I was in the chair, we increased . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** Fourfold.

**Mr. Feehan:** . . . the funding for every First Nations consultation across the board, but that was to be ongoing, not one time.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, it was based on deliverables. I assume that if they didn't make those deliverables, they wouldn't even have gotten that money, correct? There were four payouts, and they had to meet deliverables on each of those stages. All of the First Nations were able to meet those deliverables, so all of them were paid out on those deliverables. But the consultation capacity funding that was in place prior to that: that number stayed the same. I mean, that huge increase: that's not sustainable, a fourfold increase.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. Let me ask the ministry to provide to me in writing the amount of monies available to each nation for consultation, and if I could have for the last three years how much money each nation received for their half of the consultation, please.

**10:10**

**Mr. Loewen:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** Point of order noted.

**Mr. Loewen:** I don't think it's up to a member of this committee, a member himself or herself, to compel ministers to produce documents and definitely not to provide timelines, especially if we're talking about estimates for this year, asking for the last three years in the past. Of course, the member asking was actually the minister at the time. Again, compelling documents by a member, not from the entire committee, I don't believe is allowed and definitely not giving timelines.

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm asking for a written response, as we always do in estimates, to the question I have. The question I have is: what is the core funding for every First Nation for consultation? My request was so that I understand how that has progressed over the last three years because there have been changes, and the minister has not given me an answer that I can understand as to why this has changed.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your response. I will reiterate that the minister is under no obligation to give you an answer of any sort. He can tell you stories of visits to the First Nations if he wants to. You can't put a timeline on the request. If the minister would like to provide that information, if his staff has time at some point to provide that historical information, that you likely have as a previous minister – he's not compelled to do that as well. But carry on, Minister, if you'd like to answer that.

One other point?

**Mr. Wilson:** I just have another point I'd like to make.

**Mr. Loewen:** Just one other point I want to make. There is a possibility that this information, being that specific to each band and how much money they received: I don't know if that's appropriate to be released either. I'm not sure. I'm just putting it out there.

**The Chair:** Quite possibly it could be confidential information.

Go ahead, Minister.

**Mr. Wilson:** I'll have the department look into that.

Like I said, we do continue to discharge the duty to consult and uphold the honour of the Crown, of course. We did fulfill a commitment to the core funding for the consultation capacity program in this budget. In addition to having already fully funded the one-time commitments in the last budget based on the completion of the required due diligence, the previous government committed to an unsustainable increase in funding, but we have since returned to the core funding levels, that were previously adequate. The indigenous consultation capacity program is only meant to give base funding to help indigenous communities cover expenses like, of course, setting up an office, their administration costs, and their salary contributions. But we also have other tools. We updated the proponent guide, and we regularly schedule meetings on nonmonetary ways to build skills, knowledge, and expertise.

**Mr. Feehan:** Great.



**Mr. Wilson:** The proponent guide: industry has really been happy with the changes we've made . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm sure they are.

**Mr. Wilson:** . . . as well as First Nations because now they understand . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** Not what I'm hearing.

**Mr. Wilson:** . . . clearly what is meant by consultation.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. Let's talk about that. You've brought up the new guide that you put out and that you delivered since the last time we were in estimates, and I gather that that's part of the funding that we're seeing here in section 6, under consultation, land, and policy. That's the work they've been up to. I guess I was surprised to see a new guide because I hadn't heard of any consultations with First Nations about changing the consultation policy. Can you tell me if there were any consultations done before the new guide was written up?

**Mr. Wilson:** Actually, it's not a change to the policy. It's just to clarify what everybody's roles are. We updated the proponent guide to the First Nations and Métis settlements, and it clarifies the roles and responsibilities for proponents for First Nations and Métis settlements who participate in Alberta's consultation process. We're also developing a new First Nations and Métis settlements guide to consultation policy and accompanying training with that.

Every quarter we meet with members of the Metis Settlements General Council to provide information, to identify common issues and challenges, and to undertake joint planning initiatives. The digital innovation office is helping us develop the aboriginal consultation office digital service, a usercentric service for First Nations and Métis settlements, proponents, industry, and the aboriginal consultation office. It's going to support a more effective, efficient, transparent, and timely consultation process. As part of our whole red tape reduction . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** What I understand is that this is just a clarification. You did not change any of the policies for consultation.

**Mr. Wilson:** The policies are the same.

**Mr. Feehan:** The policies remained exactly the same?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. We've got forums going on with the Alberta Chamber of Resources, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the Alberta Forest Products Association, and we meet quarterly with them as well. We've got a really good consultation office. The people are working hard there to make sure that everybody is up to speed with what's happening. We're trying to modernize the way the information is given out, just to streamline it a bit.

**Mr. Feehan:** So this new guide that went out was simply a reiteration of what was already in existence. You're hopefully wording it in a clearer manner.

**Mr. Wilson:** Clarifying everybody's roles and responsibilities, trying to cut through some of the red tape.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. I'll take your word that there were actually no policy changes at all, and that's why there was no consultation.

**Mr. Wilson:** We of course would consult if there were going to be any changes.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. There was no consultation with the nations about the rewording of anything in that document.

**Mr. Wilson:** Our people are constantly working with the First Nations, myself as well. As you know, I travel constantly to meet with First Nations, and they come to the Legislature.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. I certainly understand the job. Okay. Thank you.

I want to ask a little bit more about the consultation moving forward. Now, there was quite an extensive process, a couple of years long, in terms of renewing the consultation policies, and a number of things were suggested at the time. I can give you an example for clarity: requiring the ACO to require proponents to involve First Nations and Métis settlements in the development of level-3 consultation plans for large complex projects. Just an example. Can you tell me: in your budget here is there any provision made for actually renewing the policy in consultation? You were just telling me now that this last thing you just issued didn't actually change policy, just clarified things.

Can I ask the chair how much time we have left?

**The Chair:** Just under two minutes.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you for your patience. Sorry. At this point the government would not renew the First Nations and Métis settlements consultation policies. For more than two years the previous government engaged with First Nations and Métis settlements, industry and municipal stakeholders, and government ministries to renew consultation policies and guidelines. The purpose was to identify ways to improve Alberta's consultation process based on issues and concerns that indigenous communities and stakeholders raised. The previous government did not complete the policy renewal before the end of their mandate. With any policy a balance is critical, and we need stability and predictability in the regulatory environment to achieve that balance. Renewing consultation policies and guidelines will not tip that balance. Today we have a new mandate that balances cost savings by relieving regulatory burdens, and this gives us the freedom to work with indigenous communities, industry proponents, and municipal stakeholders to identify practical ways to create more efficient, effective consultation policies.

**Mr. Feehan:** Have you budgeted for an actual change in the consultation policy, then?

**Mr. Wilson:** No. We're not changing policy.

**Mr. Feehan:** So you don't anticipate any changes in the consultation policy. None of the requests from the Métis community or the First Nations communities in that two-year process will be acted on now. It's over.

**Mr. Wilson:** We're not changing the policy at this time.

**Mr. Feehan:** Not changing the policy. A lot of work gone to waste, but okay.

You've mentioned some protocol agreements that have been signed this year. I think you mentioned that you renewed the previously signed Blackfoot Confederacy agreement this year. I'm happy to hear you're continuing our work. Can you tell me: have you signed any other new protocol agreements this year?

**Mr. Wilson:** We've got another one coming up very shortly.

**The Chair:** Sorry to interrupt, Minister.

We'll now move to 20 minutes of questions and answers from the UCP government caucus. Who's beginning, and are you wanting to go back and forth?

**Ms Rosin:** Yes, please, if it's okay.

**The Chair:** Minister, are you okay with back and forth? Thank you.

**Ms Rosin:** Awesome. Well, thank you so much for being here today, Minister and all of your staff, and for all the incredible work you're doing for our province and for our indigenous communities. My first question will be with reference to the indigenous litigation fund. Specifically, I believe it's under key objective 1.2 in your business plan, page 96, which is about our goal to administer this litigation fund to support indigenous peoples' advocacy for responsible resource development. I know that recently, actually just with the Teck announcement or prior to the Teck announcement, I suppose, we had First Nations such as Fort McKay sort of threatening that they may actually issue a court challenge against the federal government if resource projects were stalled. I think that really goes to show how necessary this litigation fund is for some indigenous communities who just want to be partners in prosperity. I'm wondering if you can talk a bit about this litigation fund. I also hear that there may have been some good news recently about this fund, so I'm wondering if you can tell us about that.

10:20

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you for the question. We did just do a news release down at the Indian Resource Council. All the pro-development First Nations from across the province were there, and the Premier along with Chief Isaac Laboucan-Avirom announced that they were going ahead with a court challenge. We work hard to ensure that indigenous communities can participate and benefit from responsible natural resource development in the province.

Indigenous peoples have diverse views on resource development, of course, and there are many who see the benefits to their communities from developing those natural resources. We stand up for indigenous communities with practical action, just like with the Woodland Cree, Chief Isaac, as I just mentioned, through a \$187,688 grant to intervene in Alberta's constitutional challenge of Bill C-69.

The indigenous litigation fund helps indigenous voices be heard in legal actions that try to prevent responsible development related to oil and natural gas, and that includes pipelines. We do this because indigenous peoples benefit from responsible development of energy, forests, and minerals, and many view responsible natural resource development as a path to shared prosperity, creating wealth to reinvest in ways that their communities want and need. That financial value comes back to communities. Between 2015 and 2016 oil sands operators invested more than \$3.3 billion on procurement with indigenous organizations and worked with 399 indigenous businesses in 66 Alberta communities. They put back a lot into the communities.

I've become pretty good friends with Chief Isaac. The first time I met him, he said: whenever you're not sure what to do, just do what Chief Isaac would do. When I go to do something, I always think: what would Chief Isaac do in this situation? He's a great guy.

As part of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project companies also signed 48 impact benefit agreements worth \$400 million with indigenous groups in Alberta and British Columbia. We also know that views vary across and within indigenous communities. Their opinions, as in any community, are nuanced and often bring issues of rights and self-government to discussions on site-specific development of land and natural resources. Some

indigenous groups seek to minimize negative environmental effects on their reserves and traditional lands while participating in natural resource development. Others are more concerned about retaining their traditional ways of life and culture. Others still strongly support responsible natural resource development. For example, there are three indigenous-led coalitions or groups seeking equity in the Trans Mountain pipeline and expansion projects.

Indigenous communities, coalitions, and groups that are ready to stand up to antidevelopment groups that would prevent them from making their own decisions and investments can apply to that indigenous litigation fund. We've been able to reprofile \$9.75 million into the 2020-21 fiscal year to help more applicants stand up for their communities and for Alberta. Antidevelopment groups have access to multiple sources of funding, and they're generally well funded. This is to help those that aren't able to fight back. We're going to help them to fight back.

**Ms Rosin:** Wonderful. Thank you.

My next question will be in regard to the Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, which was your baby from the last session. I know that this has been an incredible piece of legislation that we put forward, an incredible creation by our government. I'm fortunate to represent an area that has four very pro-development, economic-thinking, and forward-looking First Nations reserves and bands in my riding, and I think that this is such a tremendous opportunity for all of them. Under key objective 1.1 of your business plan, again on page 96, you mention the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation. I'm wondering if you can fill us in on that initiative and let us know what has progressed since its launch earlier this year. I can see in your budget that there is \$2 million in relation to the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation.

**Mr. Wilson:** Okay. Well, thanks for the question. When we introduced the bill, it was amazing to watch. I mean, literally everybody wanted to speak to it.

**Ms Rosin:** Yeah.

**Mr. Wilson:** I think everybody on both sides of the House spoke to it; it was pretty cool. We had good support for it, and I really appreciate that. The Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation is going to help indigenous communities own and invest in major natural resource development projects. Like I said before, it's not just oil and gas; it includes forestry, mining, and renewables. There have been a lot of interesting renewable projects come forward. I've seen everything from geothermal to windmills to water energy, so there's a lot of interesting stuff coming forward.

The board is looking for sound investments that are going to get the money flowing back into the communities to develop social and economic projects in need. The corporation does have up to \$1 billion in financial mechanisms to support these investments. The AIOC's operational funding, provided over a four-year period, is \$24 million.

The government needs to have robust oversight and accountability of these public funds, and that starts with a strong board of directors with significant skills in financial and risk management. We are putting other measurements in place. For example, we included regular reporting about the AIOC's actions through the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation Act, and this information can be requested regularly such as through an annual report or as needed.

As the minister I can also request that the AIOC provide any reports, records, or other information required by the minister for the purpose of reviewing this information. The information can be

requested regularly as needed, and key performance indicators such as indigenous participation in projects, investments, returns, decisions, and practices will be collected and assessed as part of this reporting. As minister I can also issue directives to the corporation, which must be fulfilled.

Treasury Board and Finance also have a high-level oversight role of the AIOC's financial components.

There's also our amazing deputy minister who sits on the board of directors. The deputy is an observer with no voting rights, but he receives all the materials provided to the AIOC's board and can attend any AIOC board meetings. I'm confident that these and the other measures will provide an oversight and accountability that Albertans will expect from our government.

Like I say, we've already received, I know, 18 applications, that are being reviewed at this point. The board is a very competent board. That's one of the things we made sure of, that it was a very high-level, competent board that can review the applications and make good, sound financial decisions. They will be going out for a CEO search, so if you know somebody that's got high-level banking experience, there is a good job opportunity coming up right there. That person is going to be key to the board because they're going to be seeing the projects come in first and help the proponents as they bring stuff forward. Of course, there are going to be a lot of greenfield projects that will be coming forward, and we'll have to make sure that they're viable and they're proven.

We want to set this up for success. You've probably heard the Premier say at times that if this is successful, we'll look at increasing this program as well. So we have to make sure that it's a very successful program because we want to help as many First Nations and Métis settlements. Even the MNA is involved in this as well. They can make applications. So it covers the whole gamut across the province.

Like I say, this summer was quite fascinating. My office was like a real *Dragons' Den*. We had every business and corporation at very high levels coming through and seeing how they could participate. That's the thing I really find interesting. Like, there's a whole paradigm kind of shift in industry. They want to be engaged with indigenous people. I mean, some of the stuff that Suncor has done up there is amazing, how they're working with indigenous people. Everybody from every walk of business out there wants to have that indigenous capacity built into their corporation. I think it's a real change that's coming, and it's going to be great for the indigenous people to be able to participate in things that they weren't able to participate in before.

When we were doing our engagements, one of the things we really heard was the ability to access capital. On a First Nation you don't really have the same ability. If I or you want to go for a loan, you can put your land up as collateral and go for a loan. You can't do that with reservation land; you can't put it up for collateral. That's what's been kind of holding them back from getting involved in some of these larger projects, that capacity to get a loan. Any loans they have been getting have been very high-interest types of loans. It makes it difficult to get involved in a big project if you're paying, you know, rates as high as 15 to 17 per cent. Now with the backing of the Crown, they can get loans reduced 2, 3 per cent. It makes projects that weren't viable all of a sudden viable when you're able to access capital at that level. I think you're going to see them, like, involved in everything from some of the big projects up north with Suncor, Syncrude, of course, CNRL, some of those bigger companies that are doing some of the major projects, as well as into some of the pipeline projects: TMX, of course. The federal government is looking at how they can participate with the First Nations buying into that, and hopefully we can help them go along that line, too.

10:30

We've got, like I say, three groups right now that are working with the people to see all along the line how they can participate in being an owner in that project, so that's really exciting. It would be a whole game changer for the indigenous people to be involved in projects of that magnitude. You're talking, you know, projects upwards of investments of \$100 million. That is what we can go up to, and we can go higher if it comes back to cabinet as well. There's access to some large capital funding there to help the First Nations be involved in these larger scale projects. Like I say, it's a really exciting time, and we've removed a lot of the barriers that were holding them back from getting into these large projects.

When I was touring in the summer – if you get up into the northern area there, you get up to that Fort McKay area, it's amazing what they've done up there. I mean, it's like a model community. You know how much unemployment they have there? Zero. Zero unemployment. That's amazing. I used to be with Alberta Health at one time and saw and went through a lot of seniors' homes. The best seniors' home I've ever seen in the province is at Fort McKay. I asked them if I can retire there. It's amazing.

And right beside the seniors' home they've got a seniors' drop-in centre. Beside the seniors' drop-in centre is a children's daycare, so the kookums and the mushums can have the grandkids right there. Even the chief's grandchild was in there. We had Minister LaGrange with us, and she was picking up all the kids. It was a great tour. Out of that seniors' centre, if the seniors didn't want to be in the seniors' lodge, if they want to live in their own homes, they'll deliver meals every day throughout the whole village, and they also come and clean the entire house twice a year. There was literally a crew out there brushing down houses and hosing them down. Paved driveways, grass: it looked like a retirement village someplace. It was beautiful. So I was really impressed with the work they're doing up there. They've been able to do that because they've been able to create these partnerships, and we want to be able to do throughout the whole province, have everybody have that ability to create these partnerships and have that pride.

You go into a lot of the First Nations now, and unemployment is as high as 90 per cent. The only jobs are in the band offices. It's brutal out there. I mean, as a young person in those situations, that's where a lot of these addictions issues are coming from. It's right across our whole community. Because of the downturn in the economy, we're seeing that everywhere. The thing that just scared me in my own area: the petty crime that we're seeing everywhere to get high on meth. How much do you think that costs? Three dollars. It's ridiculous. That's why you're seeing all these crimes of opportunity, just smash a window and grab the money and run. It's pretty heartbreaking. If we can turn that around, if the First Nations can thrive and survive with our program, that's going to help everybody because that's going to spin off into the entire community.

We did a study once for our area. One business said that for every dollar that he puts back into the community from people working for him, it spins around seven times. You can imagine, if we're doing a \$100 million project in the community, how that's going to spin out not just to the First Nations community but all the surrounding communities as well and the job creation that's going to happen from that.

I'm really excited to get our first project out the door. Just like you said, we want to see what that first project looks like and make sure it's successful and keep building on that momentum. It's just exciting to be part of that whole thing. It's such an honour to be able to do that.

**Ms Rosin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you for the question.

**Ms Rosin:** Yeah. Of course. My pleasure.

My last question, before I pass it off, is in regard to outcome 1, again on page 96, improved economic security and prosperity of the indigenous peoples of Alberta. As I think everyone knows, our government has been quite vocal that economic development is a huge focus for our government, so I'm wondering, as someone who already represents an area with two indigenous casinos in it – I have the Stoney Nakoda casino and the Grey Eagle casino – if you are going to address the requests from many of the First Nations in Alberta for the casino moratorium to be lifted.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. That decision is with the AGLC. But I have met with First Nations that have got huge interest in that, one right in my own area. They're looking at a casino. It's been on the books, believe this or not, for over 20 years. I used to be on county council there when it first came through the door. We approved it at the county level, to be able to do the casino and hotel operation. We thought it'd be great for our area, just the opportunity for local people to be able to work there and drive some money back into the community. I was with it right from day one, and a lot of the people that are on council remember those days yet.

We've been working with them. I've been trying to help them. I used to be a developer back in my day as well, so I understand a lot of the processes. If you've never done that type of thing, it can be very confusing, getting through the whole development process at the municipal level: what you have to do, who you have to talk to, the zoning, and everything that goes along with that. I've been helping the First Nation out there with my contacts still through the local municipality there. We're at the point of getting them to their proper zoning, and then they also have to work with Transportation because there are issues around highway corridors and moving traffic in and out to make sure it's done safely. I think any time you are doing a pull-off – they want to provide a rest area and a pull-off – that's good for all of the traffic as well. If people that are travelling get tired, there's a safe place. I used to be a trucker, and it wasn't that you stopped at a restaurant because it was the best food. It was usually because it was an easy place to get off and then park. So if you see a lot of trucks parked at a restaurant, it's not necessarily that you should go eat there, but it is good parking. That's always important.

We're looking at all those issues. They're at stage 7 of 8 on that casino. They have to go through eight different segments to get approval, and they're very close to that approval stage. That one is not looking at a full-blown, large casino but having some casino aspect to it, a truck stop, a pull over, a rest area. The part that's really exciting about it is that they want to create a cultural centre with it. The location, along highway 2, to do a cultural centre with all that traffic going by: I was really excited about that. They'll be able to highlight the whole history of the indigenous people in the area. You can interact with it. You pull off, go to the rest area. All of a sudden you've got a cultural centre to walk through, maybe some teepees set up. You say: what's going on here? You walk in and buy something in their store. It also gives the people that do handicrafts and that type of thing the opportunity to sell some of their products that they make.

I was actually lucky enough – I have a good friend that teaches on Maskwacis, and they invited to me their entrepreneurial class. Over the years I've done a lot of crazy things and a lot of different businesses, and they wanted me to just speak to them about how to start a business and that type of thing. It wasn't just kids. There were

people there from 16 to 60. It was really interesting to go in there and talk to them, and they were just fascinated. I had my pin on, and they were asking about the Mace and MLAs. I said, "Well, you know, if you want to be an MLA, just work hard and diligently. I'm a carpenter and a farmer, and now I'm your Indigenous Relations minister. There's no reason why any one of you can't do that." For them to hear that, that they have the ability . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry to interrupt, Minister.

We'll now move on to 10 minutes for the Official Opposition, followed by a short break. Go ahead, Mr. Dach.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity. Thank you, Minister. I prefer to go back and forth if you wish to continue that way. Thank you so much. I have a couple of questions that I'd like to start off with. First of all, referencing page 98 of your business plan, key objective 2.2, it's outlined that your responsibility, one of the main responsibilities is collaboration with other ministries and government agencies to advance the interests of Alberta's indigenous people. I'd like to ask if you're aware of or working in collaboration with the Ministry of Children's Services on the ongoing work necessary to meet the recommendations of the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention. Particularly, one of the recommendations was to immediately, in 2018-19, fully implement Jordan's principle. Has this happened?

**10:40**

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. You would have to ask the Minister of Children's Services that, but we do help her and work closely with her as far as making introductions. That's why we set up meetings with the First Nations, so that she can sit down and dialogue and start the dialogue around C-92. It's going to be critical work this year with that coming forward. The key thing we want to do is make sure that no kids fall through the cracks in the transition here. We do support them looking after their own children, of course, but with the federal government there is a lack of clarity around funding and how this is all going to come to fruition. So our minister has a tough job ahead of her, but she's up for the job and working hard to get it done.

**Mr. Dach:** So you don't see it as part of your role as a minister, under the business plan key objective of collaborating with other agencies, to have oversight or the opportunity or the responsibility to have an ongoing dialogue with the Minister of Children's Services to ensure that Jordan's principle is implemented?

**Mr. Wilson:** Actually, of course, Children's Services has the oversight over it. Our ministry: I always say that that's what we do, that we open doors. I don't have a lot of money, but I can open doors. So that's what we do. We meet with the chiefs because I have very good relationships across the province. There are two or three First Nations that have been working very hard on this and are pretty much ready to go, so that's where we'll be starting. I'm hoping that by starting with those ones that have been working on it for quite some time, they are able to be a model for other First Nations to see how they are moving forward with it. It's a very complex issue, like I say, and we want to make sure that the kids are looked after and that we don't have any kids falling through the cracks on this one. It's going to be a tough one. So I do work closely with the other ministries on this.

**Mr. Dach:** In your role as minister, as you just indicated, you work closely with other ministries to ensure that Alberta's indigenous peoples' interests are advanced. Have you had any meetings with respect to the Jordan's principle implementation that you can point

to or that are recorded or any results of those meetings, minutes of those meetings, that we could look at so that we know that you are actually following through on your responsibility to advance Alberta's indigenous peoples' interests?

**Mr. Wilson:** Probably not minutes but through our protocol agreement, especially with the Blackfoot. We do have a protocol agreement there that the Minister of Children's Services signed off on as well. She was with us at the Blackfoot protocol signing. That was – when was it? – last September. Actually, it was the same date in 1877 that the treaty was signed that we signed the protocol agreement, so it was kind of a historic event. The Premier was there. I was surprised. He even smoked the peace pipe, and so did the Minister of Children's Services. We made a commitment. Like, when you smoke the peace pipe, that's not just smoking a peace pipe. You're making a commitment.

**Mr. Dach:** Well, let's bring things right up to date here. I've been wanting to know more. Currently . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** We didn't have minutes, but we smoked the peace pipe.

**Mr. Dach:** . . . I wanted to know more about how the government is supporting indigenous communities in developing cultural mentoring and peer support programs and services. Can you speak to that, cultural mentoring and peer support programs and services?

**Mr. Wilson:** For whom are we talking?

**Mr. Dach:** For indigenous communities in developing . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** Is that in the business plan?

**Mr. Dach:** It is in relation to the business plan, yeah.

**Mr. Wilson:** Do you have an actual line?

**Mr. Dach:** I don't have a line item, but I would have thought that this was something that you are involved in doing as a means of advancing . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** It sounds kind of paternalistic, if you want. I don't do cultural mentoring. They would maybe culturally mentor me.

**Mr. Dach:** Well, I'll tell you what; I'll move on to another question. What type of work is the indigenous research committee undertaking in regard to the recommendations of the panel, and under which ministry is this funded?

**Mr. Wilson:** That's Children's Services again. What are you specifically asking?

**Mr. Dach:** Is your ministry working with Children's Services and Advanced Education to increase indigenous peoples' enrolment in social work programs?

**Mr. Wilson:** Not directly, probably.

**Mr. Dach:** Okay.

**Mr. Wilson:** What we do: like I say, any opportunity we have to have Children's Services or community services or our MLAs – any time I go into anybody's area, we invite the MLAs, and all ministers are invited to come and join us. Especially when you do the protocol agreements or the larger meetings with all the chiefs, we invite all the MLAs from the area to be part of it so that everybody can interact.

**Mr. Dach:** Okay. Well, the purpose of my questions is to try to get a better handle on the nature of your work as a minister and as a ministry. With respect to the business plan the key objective is to collaborate with other government agencies and ministries to advance the interests of Alberta's indigenous people, yet I'm not getting a clear sense that there's a way that you have of recording what accomplishments you might have had or indeed what meetings you've had or how you've interacted with other ministries to actually benefit Alberta's indigenous people as sort of a lead ministry in making sure that your whole government has its focus on benefiting indigenous people. How do we get a handle to measure what you're actually accomplishing out of your main objective?

**Mr. Wilson:** Indigenous Relations provides expert advice, guidance, and specialized knowledge to other governments, Alberta ministries. We want to enhance the inclusion of indigenous peoples' perspective when we develop, implement, and monitor policies, programs, and initiatives, and we also have a role in supporting other ministries to effectively engage and consult with indigenous communities across a range of government priorities. Ways to help include developing tools, training, and educational resources to enhance government staff capacity to support effective and efficient engagement and consultation with indigenous communities. Other ministries ask us about issues management; support in developing cabinet reports; for research, statistical information; intergovernmental agreements with an indigenous focus.

We've developed and overseen implementation of government-wide policies and guidelines for consultation with First Nations and Métis settlements on land and natural resource management, and we regularly give strategic advice about appropriate protocols and recommend methods to successfully plan, communicate, and conduct engagement with indigenous communities. We've given advice to the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women on the most respectfully and culturally appropriate ways to include legal indigenous representation at an upcoming federal-provincial-territorial meeting on culture and heritage. We also monitor federal legislation to glean learnings or negative effects that can inform government response to new federal proposals.

**Mr. Dach:** Okay. Well, thank you for that.

What you said earlier is that you don't have a lot of money, so a lot of these things that you do may not show up in line items in a budget. But is there work that you've done? You've listed a number of things that you've indicated that work has been done on in collaboration with other ministries. What evidence is there of this work other than listing it? Have there been reports generated that the public could turn to to see what happened as a result of some of these meetings and interactions and what benefit resulted? Is there a way that we can actually visualize and understand exactly what happened in these meetings so that we know that your ministry is accomplishing what you tell us you're trying to accomplish?

**Mr. Wilson:** We're Indigenous Relations, so we provide trusted advice to other ministries. It's not necessarily to generate reports. We don't keep exact minutes of all the meetings that we have. No. Other departments, I guess, that we've worked with: Transportation. I'm working with them right now on water and road projects. I've been going around – and it doesn't matter if it's indigenous communities or any community – and the biggest issue that I'm hearing everywhere is roads. Everybody wants good roads in their communities. I mean . . .

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

We will take a quick five-minute break. Please be prompt and get back to your seats.

[The committee adjourned from 10:49 a.m. to 10:54 a.m.]

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you very much. I'd like everybody to please take your seats.

We'll proceed with 10 minutes of questioning from the United Conservative government caucus, beginning now.

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Rehn was supposed to start, but I'll jump in.

**The Chair:** Mr. Smith, go ahead.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you very much. Mr. Minister, through the chair, could I go back and forth?

**The Chair:** Absolutely, if the minister is willing.

**Mr. Smith:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Minister. You know, I just want to start by saying thank you very much for all of the co-operation that you've given me as I've been trying to meet my constituents' needs, especially in the First Nations areas. I know we've had some really good conversations on the AIOC and on the geothermal thing. Maybe at some point in time later on in this budget process we can have some more conversation about that.

Okay. I want to start by taking you to the business plan, page 99, outcome 3. Of course, outcome 3 is "increased opportunities for reconciliation with Indigenous leadership and organizations." Found it?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah.

**Mr. Smith:** Okay. Great. I was just meeting with some of the Métis settlements over the last little while, and I'm hearing from some Métis communities in my area about the recent credible assertion ruling. Can you provide us with some information so that I can get back to them about how that's going to impact reconciliation with indigenous leadership and organizations?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you. This was the first one that's been done, so it was really important. The Métis organizations and the MNA have been watching this closely, of course. Under that, they seek to be consulted on Crown decisions related to land management and natural resource development, including the Métis Nation of Alberta.

They may do so through what they call the credible assertion process. It's built upon criteria found in relevant case law. Alberta doesn't have jurisdictional authority to determine or recognize Métis aboriginal rights; that's a matter for the courts to decide. A credibly asserted Métis organization will be consulted and should receive annual indigenous consultation capacity funding along with First Nations, Métis settlements. The credible assertion process identifies whether asserted section 35 rights are sufficiently credible so that consultation will be required for land and natural resource management decisions. The credible assertion process provides certainty to government that we are directing consultation to the appropriate Métis organizations.

Indigenous Relations has a comprehensive credible assertion information package, available on our public website, which describes how a Métis organization initiates the process. My ministry provided funding to the MNA, the Métis Nation of Alberta, provincial office and most MNA regions in April 2019 for community and traditional land-use research reports, and these are due to my department staff in the spring. Potential outcomes of the

reports may help the MNA or its regions submit information to support a credible assertion.

The Fort McKay Métis Community Association is the first Métis organization in Alberta to establish an assertion. Since 2016 the Fort McKay Métis association was actively engaged in Alberta's credible assertion process. The community was informed on February 13, 2020, of its success and that consultation will commence on March 26, 2020, 30 working days from the date the decision was notified. The previous government worked over two years in trying to advance Métis consultation policy, and they were not able to complete the policy and just threw money in in the final days of their mandate.

The credible assertion policy: we have a really good pamphlet on the whole thing. It lays out what you need to know to do it, and I think we have several applications on the go right now. There are nine things they have to do to be credibly asserted. They have to have a description. They have to have a characterization of a right that defines the scope of the right being asserted and the location, their geographical area; historic rights, contemporary rights; verification of membership in the contemporary community; identification of the relevant time frames; was the practice integral to the community's distinctive culture; continuity between historic practice and contemporary right; authorization to represent the contemporary Métis community; and representative of organizational membership.

If they can meet all of these criteria, then it goes – it isn't done by me; it's done at arm's length. There's a crossministry panel that reviews all this information. I believe it took them four years to get through the process – three years? – three years to get through the process. They worked hard at it. I mean, they worked hard. They spent a lot of money, but they were able to do that.

**11:00**

Now they're able to be consulted, which is huge to them because now when big projects go forward – that area has to be laid out where they have to be consulted in, and all of that is done through the assertion process. Now if a major project is going forward and it's in their area that's been identified that they've had traditional rights in, they will be consulted. That gives them the opportunity to talk with whatever is going on there that they could possibly have some impact benefits from, maybe put some of their people to work or this type of thing. For them to get this credible assertion is huge for that area, and I was actually happy that they got it because it really helps them to show that they are – because they're right beside Fort McKay, who has, like, the best houses, and they're in trailers. That's the difference.

**Mr. Smith:** If a Métis settlement were wanting additional information, just for the record, you said that you have this information on the website?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yes. Métis settlements aren't part of this. Métis settlements already have . . .

**Mr. Smith:** Okay.

**Mr. Wilson:** They have to be consulted.

**Mr. Smith:** Yes. Okay.

**Mr. Wilson:** This is for any Métis organization. I believe it was done under the Powley court decision as to who has to be consulted.

**Mr. Smith:** If they needed help or a contact person, would they be able to call your office and get help that way?

**Mr. Wilson:** On alberta.ca: if they go onto that website, they can pick up that information. Then we have the pamphlets available as well, but you can get it online or right through my office.

**Mr. Smith:** Is there contact information on there?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yes. All the contact information is on there.

**Mr. Smith:** Okay. Good. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. It's going to be a game changer for that organization. There are going to be some issues around it as to who should be consulted and who shouldn't, but that was up to the courts to decide, not up to us.

**Mr. Smith:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you for the question.

**Mr. Smith:** I'll pass it on to another member.

**Mr. Rehn:** Good morning. Thank you, Minister, and thank you to your staff for coming today. I'd like to know if I could go back and forth with you.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yes.

**Mr. Rehn:** Okay. As you know, my riding has many First Nations and Métis settlements in it, and I'd like to commend you. From talking with them, they tell me that it's a breath of fresh air, what you're doing for them and doing with your ministry. Thank you very much for all your hard work.

As someone who represents many First Nations in my riding, I hear a lot about tie-in projects and funding. Where do we see that reflected?

**Mr. Wilson:** Are you talking water, like water plants?

**Mr. Rehn:** Yes. Water tie-in.

**Mr. Wilson:** That would be under Transportation's ministry.

**Mr. Rehn:** Transportation.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. I can go through some of the . . .

**Mr. Rehn:** Sure. If you don't mind.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. We're maintaining the \$100 million commitment to the regional water tie-in. That's to have clean, safe water, and that's every human's right. Every community should be able to offer that. We're going to collaborate with our government partners to ensure that First Nations have access to safe drinking water. To date we've provided \$38.6 million, and that's over 10 projects and benefiting 14 First Nations.

Federal government technicians informed Indigenous Relations staff that they remain committed to the completion of the identified projects. Projects are in the construction, detail, design, or feasibility study phase. The previous government approved feasibility studies and design for projects, but not all that capital funding has been allocated for construction. Transportation holds the funding and is responsible for the project management, and Indigenous Relations is responsible for the relationship management on that. All grants go to the water commission or municipality, and the Transportation minister could probably answer the timelines on that better than what I would be able to.

**Mr. Rehn:** Okay. All right. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Wilson:** I'm actually working – in my area we're working on a waterline project as well. Where they've been a little bit slow and where I've had to help is . . .

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I'm sorry to interrupt, Minister.

We will now move to 10 minutes for the Official Opposition, starting with Mr. Dach.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Chair. I have another series of questions that I'd like to ask. Referencing the business plan, page 96 in particular, with the AIOC being top of mind, I'm curious to know about the scope of the definition of major resource projects. Of course, page 96 of the business plan mentions major resource projects. Page 129 of the estimates indicates medium- to large-scale indigenous investment in natural resource projects, including pipelines. I'm just wondering in those definitions how prescribed they actually are because when it came out I was kind of disappointed to know that once again indigenous populations of the province are being told: here is this opportunity for you, but here is the prescribed route that you have to follow.

You mentioned in your previous remarks, sir, about the community of Fort McKay. You thought it was a model community, had all kinds of businesses and varieties of enterprises, and I'm just wondering how much variance there might be from actual resource extraction in the opportunities for the money under this program to flow. You mentioned also in your earlier comments that some indigenous First Nations don't have oil and gas but have wind and water, so it begs the question: could, under that definition, an indigenous First Nation apply for and be granted dollars to develop green energy, renewable energy such as wind and solar or geothermal? Beyond extraction of natural resources how elastic is this definition so that you can give some leeway to First Nations to actually take advantage of this money to invest in a way that they see fit?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, that's a great question. It is beyond oil and gas extraction. Like I think I said before, it also includes forestry, so it could be a large forestry operation that's going on, or it could be mining as well. It also includes renewables, and under renewables you could have, like I've said – we talked about the geothermal projects. It could be solar. It could be wind. They just have to be viable projects. They have to be able to show that they're going to be able to recoup their investment and make money off it and create some jobs. That's basically what we're looking at, trying to help them, not just doing a project that's not going to be a viable project because that money has to be paid back as well. We don't want to risk taxpayers' dollars. We want to make sure that they are good projects.

For the big projects we have the AIOC. It's a minimum \$20 million project, so we're talking pretty big projects, and they don't have to have any capital up front. I've heard some people say: well, we don't have the money to put up front. You don't need money to put up front. We'll upfront you the money through the loan, and you've got the AIOC to give you that backup. Then they have the ability to partner with other companies. It has to have that indigenous partnership in it, though. It has to be able to benefit their community.

**Mr. Dach:** What I'd like to know about in particular is if indeed you could foresee that applications might be successful for investment in downstream projects with respect to value-added processing, whether it be mining, whether it be resources, whether it be forestry or oil and gas and even perhaps beyond natural resources. What about opportunities to process agricultural products or even look at investing in perhaps small-plot berry

production to diversify the economy on some of the First Nations lands?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. On those smaller projects, that's going to be more covered under the aboriginal business investment fund, those that are in that \$500,000 to \$700,000 kind of range. They wouldn't fit because to look at the big projects – that's why we put the capacity funding there of \$6 million because when you're looking at a project of \$20 million to \$100 million, you have to have a very good business plan going forward. Just to get past the board, you initially have to have a plan that shows that it's going to be a viable project. Then you have to be able to take that to a funding agency and get funding for it, so that's why the whole capacity funding is there, to make sure that you've got a good business plan going forward, you can show how the money is going to be paid back, and you can show that it's going to benefit the communities.

**11:10**

Those are the bigger projects, like I say, the \$20 million and up, and not just oil and gas. It can be renewables. They just have to be viable projects. Some of the renewable projects – I mean, when you start getting into the windmill farms, those are big projects. They can cost hundreds of . . .

**Mr. Dach:** Right. It seems to be limited, though, to natural resource extraction projects rather than . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, energy projects. But like I kind of mentioned before, if this works and we can show that it works, then we can maybe spin it off on the next round into other things because one of the things we've really heard a lot about is tourism. Indigenous tourism, I think, could be huge for the province. There are a lot of opportunities out there, and I've talked to a lot of First Nations. Like, you get up to some of the Métis settlements: those are pristine lakes up there, and they've got the opportunity to do some tourism spinoff around that. If you go down to southern Alberta, one of my friends down there, Big Riel – I don't know if you know him or not – from Piikani, actually was on the real *Dragons' Den* and got funding there to do an indigenous camp. He's got teepees set up, and he's got one of the dragons investing with him in the project to do indigenous tourism.

**Mr. Dach:** So even though there are larger scale projects such as that, indigenous tourism or other ideas that came up . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** They don't fit under this existing program, but they could fit if we expand it in the next round, that type of thing.

**Mr. Dach:** Right. This program might be expanded into the next round with a wider definition. Is that what you're saying?

**Mr. Wilson:** That's what we're hoping, but first we've got to prove that this one works and then get some good projects off the ground. What we want to do is get Alberta back to work. We're an energy province, so let's pick the low-hanging fruit here and get the province working again and get the indigenous communities thriving so that we can all thrive. Like I say, it's energy. Energy could be – you know, there's a fairly broad envelope there to look at.

**Mr. Dach:** Right. My goal is to make sure that we are not once again being paternalistic in our prescription as to what indigenous opportunities we're offering and open it up as much as possible.

**Mr. Wilson:** We did an engagement before this. Like, I spent most of the spring and summer going throughout the province and

engaging with the stakeholders. We met with literally every First Nation and Métis settlement, all the business stakeholders just to see what the appetite was out there. The main appetite was to get some of the bigger projects going but to keep that lens open so that in the future we could expand it into other things.

**Mr. Dach:** I'm glad to hear that. I know that my colleagues have questions that they want to follow up with, so I'll defer to them.

**Mr. Wilson:** I just wanted to quickly mention that we do have our Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, and I work closely with her as well. That's one of the things I've looked at: indigenous tourism.

**Mr. Dach:** I appreciate that. We have other questions we wish to pursue. Thank you for that answer.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. If it's still agreeable with the minister to go back and forth for the remaining time? Great.

Just directing your attention over to the business plan on page 95, which, of course, would be the first page of your section under Indigenous Relations, very prominently mentioned here is around red tape reduction in the second paragraph, which is good to see because in the first business plan there was really no mention of red tape reduction. Kudos for bringing that forward a little bit more within Indigenous Relations.

Then specifically moving over to page 98, one of your key objectives, 2.1, which happens to be the same 2.1 from previous. I'm kind of seeing a little bit of a pattern around similar language because that initial paragraph that I mentioned earlier seems to be the exact same paragraph across every single ministry in this government. I was hoping for maybe a little bit more originality. We have basically a key objective that's very prominently put forward here, but I'm not seeing any supporting key objectives or ways to track how red tape reduction is going within the Ministry of Indigenous Relations. You'd mentioned that there was red tape reduction around consultation, so I'm wondering if maybe you could give me the top example of a piece of red tape that has been eliminated to increase consultation with our indigenous peoples. [Mr. Nielsen's speaking time expired]

Maybe next round.

**The Chair:** Sorry to interrupt. Maybe next time.

Minister, we'll move over to 10 minutes with the government caucus.

Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Walker:** Thank you. Minister, thank you so much for being here and for your officials to be here as well. I'm so excited about many of the initiatives your ministry is doing, especially the AIOC. It's going to be a great path to prosperity for First Nations in partnership with government and other partners in society. I would say, too, that in my own riding of Sherwood Park I've gotten to know a First Nation community leader, and he was sharing with me his amazing life story, beginning with a difficult life journey in British Columbia but eventually rising to become a significant leader there, turning around bands and councils, and now he's so fortunate to live here in Alberta.

I'm actually going to continue, Minister, on the red tape reduction line of questioning. In reference to key objective 2.1 from page 98 of the business plan, you mentioned supporting red tape reduction efforts. How is your ministry contributing to red tape reduction?

Thank you.



**Mr. Wilson:** Give me a second, please.

**Mr. Walker:** Yeah. No worries.

**Mr. Wilson:** As you know, we have an Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction. He always makes me nervous, because every time I see him in the hallway, he's giving me one of these. We have to make sure we do our red tape reductions or he'll do them for us.

As you mentioned, some of the business cover pages are all the same, so we've been directed to add the standardized statement about red tape reduction on our business plans. That's why they all look the same across the board. We're trying to make life better for Albertans by working to reduce the red tape that creates unnecessary regulatory burdens. By doing this work, we aim to ease access to services and speed up the approval processes.

We know we can support a streamlined consultation process that provides clear timelines and legal certainty for project proponents and indigenous communities. For instance, we updated the government of Alberta's proponent guide to First Nations and Métis settlement consultation procedures in December. The new guide clarifies the roles and responsibilities and timelines to ensure adequate indigenous consultation.

The aboriginal consultation office and Alberta Energy Regulator have made a deliberate effort to work more collaboratively to address regulatory gaps or overlaps, improve process efficiency and alignment between the two organizations, and reduce overall regulatory timelines. We've identified and are implementing 36 process-improvement recommendations.

Making process improvements is compatible with our ongoing commitment to the legal duty to consult. We are taking into account indigenous concerns in our effort to streamline service delivery, and we are streamlining some of our grant processes, moving multi-year agreements and fewer, more focused deliverables.

The big one we've done so far on the red tape reduction is the proponent guide. Actually, Lisa has been working with her department, and I've made it a priority to find as many reductions as we can. What they're doing is counting all of our red tape items first, so that's been a big effort, just getting all of those counted, and now as they reduce them, we can show how much we've reduced. We have to reduce by a third, so it's very critical and important work, and it'll move things forward. The revision clarifies administrative steps, submission standard, and all requirements of the consultation process so all participants understand who's responsible for doing what. This increases clarity while honouring our duty to consult.

What we found was that there's so much red tape, mostly federally but provincially as well, that we can reduce. For proponents to get projects approved, it's taking years. If you're tying up money for years, it's just impossible to do business. The same program in the States or somewhere else in the world can take months. That's been a big part of our problem in Alberta, getting these projects approved so that business has certainty that once they start investing money, they can actually see the light at the end of the tunnel. I mean, if we just keep building more tunnel every time they see light, we're not going to get anything built here. Wherever we can, we're looking at reducing that red tape and helping to make it more viable for corporations to do business in Alberta again.

**Mr. Walker:** Well, thank you so much, Minister. I completely agree and, you know, encourage you to continue on your great red tape reduction efforts. It's critical to empowering First Nations to work with the private sector to ensure prosperity.

Chair, I will now cede my time to Member Singh.

11:20

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Singh.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've got questions for the minister, and I would like to have the minister's permission to go back and forth.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yes, please.

**Mr. Singh:** I would like to applaud the minister and his staff for maintaining an amazing job in the ministry through various programs and initiatives. My question is regarding missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, just in reference to the subject of key objective 3.6, page 39 of the business plan. The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was released on June 3. What has our government done in the eight months since its release?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you for that question. As we've talked about, this has been an important part of our ministry, and I take it very seriously. We're working, of course, with the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women on this as well, and she's been a great help to me. We've actually spent several nights working through the night in the Leg. I've read the entire report, a 2,500-page report, three times.

It's been an important project that we're working on. The thing that's really scary about this is that the homicide rate for indigenous women is more than seven times that of nonindigenous women. That's why the report is so incredibly important. We're taking action by identifying a plan to combat human trafficking. Through the Legislature we got Clare's law passed, which is very important, so that Alberta is a safer province, where indigenous women are protected and treated with dignity. Indigenous people need to be at the heart of any actions we take in response to the national inquiry's calls for justice.

We've been working with Justice and Culture and Multiculturalism, and we've gathered input from key indigenous organizations and individuals working on violence prevention, crossministry work to inform Alberta's next steps. As you know, we declared Sisters in Spirit Day on October 4 to raise awareness about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. As Mr. Feehan says, he's been prominently wearing the moosehide patch to remind people that there is an awareness, that we need to be doing that. And the red dress that you see downstairs in the Federal Building, that was gifted to us from the Awo Taan society down in Calgary. We visited them. It's a home for women who are being abused. We went through their whole organization there.

**Mr. Singh:** Is there any spending in Budget 2020 to showcase this government's concern for indigenous women and girls? Is there any money put aside?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yes. As well as the money that was already existing, we put just about \$200,000 more to help with that. We work really closely with what we call the Métis Women's Economic Security Council. They as well as the Awo Taan society had standing in the report, so they were able to have input into that report. The information that they're providing to us is critical because they are part of the whole project. That's why we're working really closely with them and using them as a resource to see what we can move forward with from the report.

Some of those things we've already done. I think it's page 199, calls for justice, what all Canadians can do to move forward. One of the first things you can do is the awareness. So that's the first thing we did, the awareness. Having the red dress displayed and the

Speaker allowing us to do that in the Federal Building, that's about as aware as you can get. I mean, you can't miss it when you walk through there. Every time I come up there and I see that, it's, like, wow. It's powerful, powerful stuff. I lost two good friends. That's why it bothers me so much. Just before Christmas my friend's daughter went missing, and they found her the next day. Sixteen-year-old kid. It's terrible. That's why it's so important to me.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister. Sorry for the interruption.

We'll now move on to the Official Opposition for 10 minutes.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The minister is still available to go back and forth? Great. You've actually already answered my question there from the colleague across the way also alluding to the 36 initiatives that you're working on. Has there been any staff from your department that have been allocated to essentially developing these initiatives and going forward?

**Mr. Wilson:** I guess the whole department.

**Mr. Nielsen:** The whole department. Okay.

**Mr. Wilson:** It's intertwined through the whole department, so they've all been working on it. Part of what Lisa has been doing is identifying all the bureaucracy that we have and trying to . . .

**Mr. Nielsen:** Sure. So there's probably a cost to this, obviously, to direct people to getting this done.

**Mr. Wilson:** It's not a new cost. It would be existing staff that are just allocating time towards it.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Okay. So it wouldn't be reimbursed, for instance, from the red tape reduction ministry for that time?

**Mr. Wilson:** No.

**Mr. Nielsen:** So I guess, essentially, then, the decisions remain within Indigenous Relations?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. It's our job to identify the red tape that we can cut, and we've been asked to find approximately 30 per cent. That's what we're working on, just to find that 30 per cent within.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Are you planning to track your progress on this?

**Mr. Wilson:** What was that question?

**Mr. Nielsen:** Are you planning to track your progress on these initiatives?

**Mr. Wilson:** That's why we've identified it all first, so that we can track the progress and make sure that we are . . .

**Mr. Nielsen:** Maybe we'll see something in the next business plan.

**Mr. Wilson:** Oh, yes. It's coming forward as we speak. All Albertans can go online to the red tape ministry. If you've got an area that you think has been slowing your business down or whatever . . .

**Mr. Nielsen:** I was hoping a little bit more for maybe some metrics from your department.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, we'll have really good metrics because . . .

**Mr. Nielsen:** Okay. With that, Chair, I'll pass it over to MLA Feehan to finish off the time.

**The Chair:** All right. Mr. Feehan.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you. I'd like to move us to have a conversation about the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. There was some prior work done in the ministry under I guess it would be line 2, First Nations and Métis relations, on a variety of projects. You've already mentioned, for example, in response to another question, the water tie-in project. You seemed to indicate that it's a very successful project. Some good things are being accomplished there. I just wonder if anywhere in this budget you are planning more money beyond the original money dedicated to it by the previous government.

**Mr. Wilson:** Line item 2. It's dedicated, but there's no increase there.

**Mr. Feehan:** There's no what?

**Mr. Wilson:** There's no increase there.

**Mr. Feehan:** No increase. So you'll simply play out the program as it was previously set up but not add any more nations beyond what is initially funded.

**Mr. Wilson:** At this point, no, unless we can find more funding federally to help with the programs as well. We're always looking at establishing programs. There are quite a few applications right now that we're just kind of reviewing and going through. I know the one in my area: we're just working with the water commission because it involves several communities, so you have to set up a commission and then figure out who from the First Nations is going to sit on this commission as well. I believe I've got a meeting coming up in about two weeks to try to identify who's going to sit on this water commission. Everybody wants voting rights because you're going to set the costs for the water coming in and who is going to operate it, all those types of things. Those are the big questions that are being looked at in my area right now. It is moving forward, and we hope to have it up to their border, hopefully, within a year.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. But not following up on it at all. Once the previous government's set is completed, it's just over.

Is that also true of the education for public servants in terms of indigenous history, traditions, and knowledge? Are you going to continue the education of the 27,000 people, and if so, is that the end of it, again, or are you going to add round 2?

**11:30**

**Mr. Young:** We are continuing with that. We call that the indigenous learning initiative, co-led by the Public Service Commission and by Indigenous Relations. That is continuing.

**Mr. Feehan:** But just continuing out that which was planned before? No new dollars in this budget for continuing it beyond the initial round 1 funding?

**Mr. Young:** The funding wasn't in Indigenous Relations to begin with. It was in the Public Service Commission.

**Mr. Feehan:** Joint initiative.

**Mr. Young:** Yeah. No targeted funding in this budget for the indigenous learning initiative, but it is continuing.

**Mr. Feehan:** Can you tell me, Minister – there were a number of initiatives that were designed under that original United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples project. A water tie-

in, public service, education were some of them. Are you planning any new initiatives under the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, some of the things that we're doing – we renewed the Blackfoot Confederacy protocol agreement. That's under the TRC.

**Mr. Feehan:** Again, a renewal but nothing new.

**Mr. Wilson:** The big one, of course, is issuing statements on the Sisters in Spirit to honour the memory of indigenous women and girls who are missing and have been murdered. I also issued a statement on activities around Orange Shirt Day to honour residential school survivors' experiences and to acknowledge that tragic past. There is going to be future inclusion of new material in the K to 12 curriculum about residential schools, treaties, and agreements, indigenous perspectives, culture, and contributions.

I work regularly with Alberta ministries, including Alberta Health, to make life better for indigenous peoples. In December \$1.4 million per year for three years was provided to Poundmaker's Lodge Treatment Centre. That's to treat 900 people on their path to long-term recovery. This commitment not only answered indigenous leaders' many requests for more treatment spaces for their people, but it also addresses the truth and reconciliation calls to action. So we've done substantial work in this area.

Also, a good friend of mine, former Grand Chief Willie Littlechild, was the architect of a lot of this. The Premier and I had a personal audience with him just a few weeks ago to discuss the ongoing work that he's doing around the world. He's very active and a close friend of mine, so we work closely on it.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. I absolutely have deep respect for that man.

Minister, you mentioned earlier that there was a particularly horrendous racial incident at Maskwacis. Some students from I think it was a Ponoka school came onto the reserve and so on. Of course, we're all very concerned about that. I know you've expressed your concern about it, but you seem to be mocking the attempts to deal with racism as an issue. For example, the committee that we set up on racism . . .

**Mr. Loewen:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** Point of order noted. Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Loewen:** I don't see a line item for the line of questioning from this member, so we'll go under 23(b)(i), "the question under discussion." Of course, we're talking about issues that don't relate to the budget here today. The minister may have referred to something, but that doesn't bring it into the questioning of the budget documents that we're discussing here today.

**The Chair:** In defence?

**Mr. Feehan:** Well, as he addressed, the minister himself has brought this up twice already, and I think therefore that makes it something that's reasonable to talk about. It also fits into the roles and responsibilities under line item 2, First Nations and Métis relations. I would like to know whether or not, since he is mocking the work that has been done in the past, they are doing anything in that division to address the issue that he specifically has identified as an example of concern.

**The Chair:** I will at this point allow the question, and I'll leave it up to the minister whether he wishes to answer or not.

**Mr. Wilson:** First of all, I take issue with you saying that I'm mocking the issue. I take it very seriously.

**Mr. Getson:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** Point of order again.

**Mr. Getson:** The point of order I'd like to call, Chair, is actually on 23(j), use of "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to [cause] disorder," specifically with mocking racism. None of us in this room take that lightly.

**Mr. Feehan:** Nobody said that you're mocking racism.

**Mr. Getson:** It's my turn to speak, sir.

**Mr. Feehan:** You're right.

**Mr. Getson:** It's a very sensitive issue given this time of crisis in our province, given this time of tensions. We don't necessarily look at things the way you do, but I think we can all agree there is no such thing – not any hon. member as an MLA would mock anything to do with racism, particularly the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Nielsen.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think what we have here – without the benefit of the Blues, specifically I do recall Member Feehan making reference to the previous government being mocked around the work that they did on this subject, so this would be a matter of debate. I think we should continue.

**The Chair:** Okay. I would agree that this is a matter of debate.

I will leave it up to the minister whether you wish to answer. Sir, you're not obligated to answer any questions.

**Mr. Feehan:** Just to clarify this, I will ask my question differently. Obviously, I never said that you were mocking racism. Rather, your comment at the beginning was that we had set up this council, and then your offhand comment was: what good did that do? That's what I was referring to.

My real question that I'd like to get to is: since you apparently don't see the value in the racism committee – it didn't meet for almost 10 months leading up to this – is there something in your ministry that is designed to address the issue of racism, perhaps under line 2, First Nations and Métis relations? I used the example given because I know we're both quite aware of the concern that was given. But the question is quite simple and straightforward. Are you putting money into dealing with racism?

**Mr. Wilson:** Lots, because the way to deal with racism is through economic development. The Premier and the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women recently met with the Alberta antiracism council to discuss strategies to inspire Albertans to see the value of diversity. Alberta is a welcoming place. We realize we have to work harder to ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and we want a province where people have the same opportunities to build successful lives for themselves and their families.

Indigenous peoples have unique histories, experiences, and realities that require specific actions that need to be taken into account in our multiculturalism and inclusion work. Inclusion is a way for all Albertans to fully participate in the economic and social fabric of their communities and to be valued for their contributions. As a department Indigenous Relations has set an objective to

advance indigenous perspectives to government policy-making, as we are members of various crossministry committees.

On the issue that you're referring to, I actually spent last weekend with . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry to interrupt, Minister.

We will now move on to 10 minutes of questioning from the UCP government caucus.

**Ms Rosin:** I just have one question for you, and then I'll pass it back off. As you know and as I actually alluded to previously, the Teck Frontier mine was going to be a huge opportunity for many of our First Nations here in Alberta, primarily Fort McKay, who was threatening to issue a court challenge against the federal government if they were to step in and block this project. I'm just really wondering if you can talk about the billions that were lost for First Nations communities, what effect this might have on them, and what our next steps are to support them.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. We had done some amazing work up there with the chiefs, worked really closely with Chief Adam up there to come to an agreement. If there's one silver lining in the whole cloud, Chief Adam told me, he says: "No one's ever been able to make a deal with me. You're the first guy. You can do anything now." You know, actually, he's a great guy. He works hard for his community, and I was so sad that this didn't go through. This meant so much to their communities up there. It literally meant millions of dollars for the next 40 years. Like, it was economic security for them forever. For it to be yanked out at the last moment was really disheartening.

We'd done a lot of stuff. Our minister of environment had worked so hard with them to put a lot of things in place, which he's going to carry on with, with the buffalo and the caribou and creating a park and protection up there for the environment. A lot of good work was done, and a lot of monitoring work will be carried on.

Even though that particular project didn't go ahead, there were tremendous relationships built with the Mikisew Cree and the Athabasca First Nation. Actually, last summer I was up there with Minister LaGrange. We were carving moose ribs off a moose roasting over an open fire up there. Minister LaGrange was right in there. That's where we first started our relationship with the First Nation up there.

They have a lot of work to do. They don't even have a road into their community other than in the winter; they've got an ice road going in there. When the ice road isn't working, they don't get supplies in there unless they fly in. I mean, I literally saw a litre of milk for \$15 up there in the store. It's a tough life up there. Great people, though. I mean, they've got great spirit, and it's absolutely beautiful. We're hoping that we can move forward with some other projects now that we've developed that good relationship and use Teck, the process that we outlined there, to move forward.

11:40

I had a quote from the chief up there. I can't remember what it was now. I thought I had – yeah, there it is.

Through collaboration and innovation, which were key elements to finding solutions to the outstanding issues, I am pleased to share the news that we have come to an agreement with the Alberta government on [Teck]. After many productive discussions, the Alberta government has responded to our concerns with a comprehensive and meaningful package of action items . . . The environmental and cultural mitigations agreed to are unprecedented for a project of this kind.

What these things show is that we are creative in our way of thinking and coming to solutions. We do not see the answer to every problem as throwing money around, but through things like the

AIOC, which, to clarify, does not in and of itself fulfill consultation, we can reach unique agreements that address environment, financial, and cultural needs. He also said to use this process as a blueprint for future resource development decisions.

So we made some really good progress up there in developing some strong relations, and hopefully we can move forward with other projects with them and help them to be partners in prosperity with Alberta as well.

**Mr. Loewen:** Minister, thanks again for your answers here today and responses and your staff here today, too. In reference to initiatives found on page 96 of the business plan, you mentioned that there is a projected \$135 million to support First Nations development. Could you give us some insight on why that funding is up and where some of that funding might be going?

**Mr. Wilson:** What page was that again?

**Mr. Loewen:** Sorry. Page 96, under initiatives. I believe that it's bullet point 3.

**Mr. Wilson:** And what was the question again?

**Mr. Loewen:** On the \$135 million: why is that funding up, and where are some of the places where it will be distributed?

**Mr. Wilson:** Okay. That funding is what we call the FNDF, the First Nations development fund. That comes from the casinos. We're expecting it to rise. That's an estimate of what we feel it will go up to. It seems like gambling has just increased a little bit in Alberta, so that's why we're anticipating an increase there. It's from the government-owned slot machines at First Nations casinos, and that's used for projects that support job readiness, job creation on First Nations. Last year alone the FNDF grants supported approximately 370 projects for economic, social, and community development in First Nations.

Revenue is allocated based on a formula: 15 per cent to the host casino operator, 15 per cent to the host First Nation charity, 30 per cent to the general revenue fund, 30 per cent goes to the host First Nations, and 10 per cent to the nonhost First Nations through the FNDF grant program. It's spread out throughout the entire province, so not just the First Nation that has the casino sees a benefit from it. Everybody across the entire province gets some benefit from it. We're looking at, like I say – we talked a little bit earlier, and there's a possibility that we may have a couple more as they move through their approval process through the Alberta gaming commission.

**Mr. Loewen:** Okay. Thank you.

Going on to outcome 1 on page 96 of the business plan, I just want to maybe talk a little bit about the urban indigenous populations. You know, Alberta has some of the highest in Canada, and obviously First Nations people are moving to Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, cities like that. I just wondered what we're doing to help those people transition to those communities.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. There's a huge urban indigenous growth going on right now. Indigenous people are the youngest and fastest growing segment of Alberta's population, which means that they're vital to our current and future workforce and the economy.

In 2016 48 per cent of the indigenous population in Alberta lived in metropolitan areas like Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge. The Edmonton metropolitan area is home to the second-largest urban indigenous population in Canada, 76,000. That's why my ministry works to advance in respect of the needs of urban indigenous

peoples and organizations by developing and implementing government programs and services.

Upon request, we assist community organizations such as we talked about before, the friendship centres and the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, so they can apply for federal, provincial, and municipal funding to meet their needs and their clients'. Service delivery agencies provide comprehensive and culturally appropriate services to indigenous people. Friendship centres offer a significant number of services, depending on local community needs. The Métis Nation of Alberta assists with housing, employment, and economic development services.

So there's a lot of stuff happening with urban indigenous peoples and a lot around education as well. Our Minister of Advanced Education is introducing a program this year on trades. We've recognized now that the trades certificate is as important as a university certificate, so they've put substantial money into helping people in trades. As we move forward and the economy starts improving again, we're going to need those tradespeople because old guys like me can't swing a hammer anymore, so we need those young kids coming up. My daughter is actually a journeyman electrician.

As we move forward, we're seeing indigenous youth getting into the trades. I know that in my area they did a program for seniors' housing, kind of a mini home. They had some kids from the school – they've got a great school system out there – and they started building these mini homes for seniors. They must have built – I saw 15 or 20 out there. They're just small houses, like, probably in that 600 to 700 square feet. For a single person on their own, it's easy to look after and maintain and heat and everything that goes with it.

So if we can train our young people, get them into the trades, that's going to help as well, and some of that stuff is happening for the urban kids as well. I think we've done some really good stuff around the training stuff, helping the young kids.

**Mr. Loewen:** Okay. Thanks, Minister.

I had a chance to sit down with the president of the friendship centres in Alberta here.

**Mr. Wilson:** Oh, did you?

**Mr. Loewen:** I had a great conversation, talking about the urban indigenous populations in Alberta. I'm sure you've probably had that opportunity, too, but I encourage you to keep up that communication with him.

**Mr. Wilson:** He's a great guy.

**Mr. Loewen:** Yeah. A great asset for sure.

Thanks. I'll turn my time over to, I guess, MLA Getson.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, that's the end of your time.

Just before we switch over, I'd just like to remind members that I've given a fair bit of latitude in the questioning, but I think it's far safer if we stick to the budget and the documents that we have on hand. I'm not going to tolerate any personal attacks on the minister or his staff. We heard it last night as well in Ag and Forestry. Please, I caution you with your question.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you for the opportunity to just wrap up. I just have a few questions. I just simply want to know where things are at. We previously had an opportunity to address the elders' committee on indigenous knowledge and the knowledge protocol – I'm not sure that's the proper word for it – that they created for the government to use in terms of policy development. I know that

committee wrapped up last year. There was a ceremony where they brought that document forward. I'm addressing it again because I'm finding myself somewhat concerned about the fact that I have in my possession the ceremonial object, and I know I've addressed it with you before. I'm just wondering whether or not in your plan somewhere you have a plan to move that document forward. Is there going to be an opportunity for me to transfer that to you? I'm just concerned that there have been multiple requests. I want to assure you that I also did speak to one of the elders on the committee about that and suggested to the elder that perhaps it was them that should initiate this, so I'm trying to move it both ways to the middle. I absolutely want to co-operate on this, but I just want to know if you have plans moving forward.

**11:50**

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. Actually, the elders have talked to me about that, and that's what they suggested, too, because that knowledge bundle is very sacred to them.

**Mr. Feehan:** That's why I'm concerned about it.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. As I'm learning more about it, I've been getting more advice from the elders so that I make sure that it's done properly, and we just can't hand it back and forth.

**Mr. Feehan:** Right. That's why I haven't handed it to you. I guess I'm just looking forward to whatever it is you come up with, but I'm anxious because I presently possess it, and it's upstairs. You can come see it if you want.

**Mr. Wilson:** Okay.

**Mr. Feehan:** But, you know, I certainly would like to do it. Of course, I'm also interested in whether or not your business plan moving forward is going to do something with that. There is a document. I think it's about five pages long. In your planning are you going to actually take that document that they created and turn it into something for the ministry or for the government of Alberta?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. I've been working with the elders on that, and I've been waiting for their advice as to the proper protocol for doing this. We're currently considering the draft indigenous knowledge policy as a strategic made-in-Alberta policy. Indigenous Relations and crossministry partners engaged extensively with indigenous communities to understand the potential role of indigenous knowledge in government decision-making and models and processes. We value that knowledge, indigenous knowledge, and we're already seeking to incorporate it in many areas such as the caribou range planning, the regional land-use planning, environmental assessment monitoring, co-operative management of parks and bison herds. We're going to continue to work across government with Environment and Parks, the Land Use Secretariat, Energy, Agriculture and Forestry, Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women to support including indigenous knowledge. As we move forward and I get the proper protocol from the elders as to how to transfer that knowledge bundle, I'll contact you, and we'll certainly do that. Thank you for bringing that up.

**Mr. Feehan:** I certainly will participate. I'm just anxious to make sure that all that work is also instituted in terms of the work of the government.

I want to just ask about the government decision around Moose Lake. I know that there has been a project, and I know – I think there's even a court decision that was made for a final assessment last week. I know that when I was in your chair, I was involved in the discussions around that, and I just wondered if you could update

this committee on if there has been a decision on Moose Lake or if we're still waiting for one. Of course, I'm particularly interested in whether or not the 10-kilometre boundary around Moose Lake will be developed or not.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. There are ongoing discussions here, and it is before the courts, so we can't get into it too deep. But there are ongoing discussions. We went to the Moose Lake summit, myself and the minister of environment. I know that environment is working hard on this portfolio. It's been ongoing for, I believe, 20 years, so our minister is determined to get it done under his watch. It's moving forward and good relationships that . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** Was there not a court directive to give an answer on the . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** It's currently before the courts as we speak.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay.

**Mr. Wilson:** I know the Minister of Energy is working closely with Fort McKay on that.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay. Can you tell me if you anticipate any movement this year on the outstanding TLEs? I can only remember two of them, Beaver and Fort McMurray. Can you tell me if you anticipate your department doing work on those, or is it an ongoing process?

**Mr. Wilson:** It's ongoing, and at this point, of course, the federal government is very involved in that, so we have to have their input on it. I know we're waiting on their input on the Fort McMurray one. There are actually five TLE claims accepted by Canada for negotiation in Alberta: Fort McMurray, Beaver First Nation, Sunchild, and Stoney Nakoda.

**Mr. Feehan:** Right. I knew there were others, but I couldn't remember.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. A TLE claim for Doig River First Nation in British Columbia – and that has crossborder because they're right on the border – is seeking a nominal amount of land in Alberta, approximately 5,000 acres with no cash settlement.

**Mr. Feehan:** I guess the question for this budget period is: are any of them far enough along that you've actually had to include some of the resolutions of these TLEs in this year's budget?

**Mr. Wilson:** Do you know which line item that is?

**Mr. Feehan:** Line item 9.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. We do have some set aside but not for the five that I just spoke about because there are two that are still – Lubicon and . . .

**Mr. Feehan:** There are two what? Sorry.

**Mr. Wilson:** Two outstanding. Lubicon and Bigstone are still awaiting implementation, so federal government input on those two, but we do have money set aside for those.

**Mr. Feehan:** Okay, but you haven't had to include any big payouts at this time because nothing has been signed; for example, like we did with the Lubicon the year before?

**Mr. Wilson:** No.

**Mr. Feehan:** Nothing is at that particular stage. Okay.

**Mr. Wilson:** I'm hoping that we can move them forward, a couple of them for sure.

**Mr. Feehan:** Yeah. Of course. But I realize these things take time, and I appreciate that. I'm just trying to make sure I'm up to date on . . .

**Mr. Wilson:** A lot of the problem is getting the federal government to the table at the same time because it's a trilateral discussion that has to go on.

**Mr. Feehan:** I'm also wondering if you could just speak a little bit more about the litigation fund. I guess I just want to reflect that there have been some public comments by a number of chiefs that they perceive it as an attempt to divide and conquer amongst the nations. I guess I would like to give you an opportunity to address those concerns that the chiefs have expressed not to me per se but publicly. I could load up a couple here. I can read some of the concerns if you want, but I don't think that's necessary. Can you tell us how that litigation fund will be used in such a way that it will not simply be used to divide and conquer nations?

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. What we found was that, compared with antidevelopment voices, there's not really been a voice for the pro-development. The litigation fund is not a method of pitting indigenous communities against one another. In fact, it's a means by which pro-development indigenous communities will now have the opportunity to have their voices heard in the courts, voices that for too long have been ignored with respect to resource projects.

**Mr. Feehan:** So if they have a nation who's against a particular resource development, they can't use the fund, but they could be sued by others to use the fund? If you have a nation that is opposed to a development, they cannot use the litigation fund?

**Mr. Wilson:** No.

**Mr. Feehan:** No. So it's intended to only have nations that are supporting particular developments.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, we want to give them a voice. There's nobody out there that's standing up for the pro-development. When we're talking pro-development, I think almost all First Nations want development. They need development to move forward.

**Mr. Feehan:** I would think so.

**Mr. Wilson:** They just want to make sure it's done responsibly. That's what we want to do, help them have a voice, like when the federal government puts in bills that say that you can have no tankers on the west coast but bring as many as you want to the east coast. How is that fair to the indigenous people of Alberta that are trying to move their First Nations forward when you've got the federal government putting up barriers to them to move their resources? We want to be able to give them that voice to speak up and say: "You know what? These are our resources. They're under our grounds. We want to be able to participate in the economy."

**Mr. Feehan:** Fine.

One final question, then, for you came out of the conversation with the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry last night, and that is that they are planning a 33 per cent . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry, Member.

We'll proceed with the United Conservative government caucus.

**Mr. Getson:** I'll take it if I can.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Getson.

**Mr. Getson:** So, Minister, on outcome 2, page 98, it speaks quite a bit about the government's consultation with indigenous communities with regard to development. Can you expound on that a little bit for us if you would? It's just in general on outcome 2. Again, we had some questions earlier about strengthening our indigenous communities and promoting Alberta interests, and I have a follow-up question for that in specific while you're finding your spot there if I may, sir.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah.

**Mr. Getson:** Again, given that we've had some issues out in our constituencies here on the border of Edmonton with those blockades that went up, my concern, considering I have three First Nations groups, of which I'm on very good terms with the chiefs

and the councillors out there – I want to ensure that with our process and with your governance in that regard, we don't set ourselves back. Again, there are a lot of folks out there that are trying to take advantage of some of our opportunities, in my belief, and raise a ruckus, and I'm concerned, honestly, that it may set us back and push us back a bit.

**Mr. Wilson:** Yeah. That's a good concern to have. I know even in . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry. I apologize for the interruption, but I must advise the committee that the time allotted for this item of business has concluded. I would like to remind committee members that our next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 4, at 9 a.m. to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 12 p.m.]











