



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Resource Stewardship

Ministry of Indigenous Relations
Consideration of Main Estimates

Wednesday, March 10, 2021
9 a.m.

Transcript No. 30-2-14

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Second Session**

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Ministry of Indigenous Relations

Hon. Rick Wilson, Minister

Sonya Johnston, Assistant Deputy Minister, Financial Services

Donavon Young, Deputy Minister

9 a.m.

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

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

The Chair: Thank you. Good morning, everyone. I'd like to call the meeting to order and welcome everyone, including the invited guests that we have online today. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

I'd ask that we go around the table and have members introduce themselves for the record. I'm David Hanson, MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul and the chair of the committee. We will begin, starting on my right.

Mr. Turton: Morning, everyone. Searle Turton, MLA for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Getson: Good morning. Shane Getson, MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, also known as God's country.

Mr. Guthrie: Good morning. MLA Peter Guthrie for Airdrie-Cochrane.

Mr. Feehan: Good morning. Richard Feehan, MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Huffman: Good morning. Warren Huffman, committee clerk.

The Chair: We'll catch Mr. Loewen here as he just came in.

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

The Chair: Thank you, everyone.

Now we'll go to the members participating virtually. When I call your name, please introduce yourself for the record. I see Mr. Loyola.

Member Loyola: Yes. Rod Loyola, representing Edmonton-Ellerslie.

The Chair: Mr. Singh.

Mr. Singh: Good morning, everyone. Peter Singh, MLA, Calgary-East.

The Chair: Ms Issik.

Ms Issik: Good morning. Whitney Issik, Calgary-Glenmore.

The Chair: And Mr. Yaseen.

Mr. Yaseen: Good morning. Muhammad Yaseen, MLA, Calgary-North.

The Chair: Thank you, everyone. Hopefully, I haven't missed anyone.

Due to the current landscape we're in, all ministry staff will be participating in the estimates debate virtually.

Minister, please introduce yourself and your staff for the record.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you. I'm Rick Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations. Today at the table with me I've got my deputy minister, Donavon Young; assistant deputy of finance Sonya Johnston; assistant deputy minister of First Nations and Métis relations Don Kwass; assistant deputy minister of consultation, land and policy,

Michael Lundquist; and director of indigenous women's initiatives Kristina Midbo.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

I'd like to note the following substitution for the record: I have Mr. Rod Loyola for Joe Ceci as deputy chair.

Before we begin, I'd like to note that in accordance with the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health attendees at today's meeting are advised to leave the appropriate distance between themselves and other meeting participants.

In addition, as indicated in the February 25, 2021, memo from the hon. Speaker Cooper, I would remind everyone of committee room protocols in line with health guidelines, which require members to wear a mask in committee rooms while seated except when speaking, at which time they may choose not to wear a face covering.

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

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates. A total of three hours have been scheduled for consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Indigenous Relations. Standing Order 59.01(6) establishes the speaking rotation and speaking times. 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 a 60-minute speaking block for the Official Opposition begins, followed by a 20-minute speaking block for independent members, if any, and then a 20-minute speaking block for the government caucus. Individuals may only speak for up to 10 minutes at a time but may be combined between the minister and the member. The rotation of speaking time will then follow the same rotation of the Official Opposition, independent members, and government caucus, with individual speaking times set at five minutes for both the member and the ministry. These times may be combined, making it a 10-minute block. One final note. Please remember that discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not speaking times are combined. If members have any questions regarding speaking times or the rotation, please feel free to send an e-mail or message to the committee clerk about the process.

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 have any opposition to taking a break? Seeing none, we will announce that shortly.

Ministry officials, at the direction of the minister, may address the committee. Ministry officials are asked to please introduce themselves for the record prior to commenting. Space permitting, opposition caucus staff may sit, appropriately distanced, 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 individual speaking times will be paused; however, the speaking block time and the overall three-hour meeting clock will continue to run.

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

The vote on the estimates and any amendments will occur in Committee of Supply on March 17, 2021. 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 as a courtesy an electronic version of the signed original should be provided to the committee clerk for distribution to committee members.

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

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm here today to discuss Indigenous Relations' 2021-22 budget estimates. I've introduced the department staff who are with me at the table, and others have joined me in the gallery, including my chief of staff, Ted Bauer; press secretary Adrienne South; Deputy Young's chief of staff, Genevieve Turcotte; director of financial services Monika Haeckel; executive director of First Nations relations Boris Contreras; executive director of Métis relations Cynthia Dunnigan; and director of communications Olga Michailides. I am pleased to join you from a safe distance along with my ministry officials.

I would like to acknowledge that we join you here today on Treaty 6 territory, lands to which the Métis people also share a deep connection.

This last year has been a time of great uncertainty as the pandemic swept our province and threatened our health and our economy. That's why Alberta's government has adopted an approach that strikes a balance between the action necessary to limit the spread of the disease and the need to keep our economy functioning. Budget 2021 is focused on protecting Albertans' lives and livelihoods as we face one of the most difficult times in our history.

Budget 2021 continues this approach with a focus on health care and on jobs. We are increasing spending on health care and allocating funds to fight the pandemic and support jobs now and into the future. This need to protect lives and livelihoods is more pronounced for indigenous communities and peoples because they're often dealing with barriers and challenges, a wider gap than other groups. From poverty to transportation to isolation supports, indigenous communities regularly have to plan more just to get what many of us take for granted.

From the start of our mandate Alberta's government has been clear about our commitment to knock down some of those barriers so more indigenous people can prosper and get on the path to success. From the very start Premier Kenney has made it clear that only joint or collective action will change this reality. There is a moral cause to move past gestures to empowerment, and that is a cause Alberta's government has taken up.

At the same time we have another commitment, to use public dollars wisely. In addition to protecting lives and livelihoods, Budget 2021 continues to focus on spending responsibly. With a clear mandate behind us to get Alberta's economy back on track, we've been fearless about creating a future unburdened by debt.

During the next few minutes I'll talk about how Budget 2021 supports indigenous lives and livelihoods. I'd like to make it very clear that changes to the indigenous budget are largely internal as savings through good management. For instance, there have been staffing vacancies that we've opted to leave open unless they were absolutely critical. That has given Indigenous Relations' staff a way

to find new ways to work together, making sure enough dollars could be available for indigenous communities and organizations. While there have been some funding adjustments, like to the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation, our approach has been to look at how the government funds rather than how much the ministry funds.

Further to my last point, we have been looking carefully at how Alberta's government can best use the budget to support indigenous communities, organizations, and peoples instead of having overlapping granting options that just lead to more paperwork. Organizations like the Métis Calgary Family Services provide much-needed supports, and they are still receiving significant grant funding from other parts of government. We have also preserved funding for the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association. We provided \$50,000 to the Red Deer Urban Aboriginal Voices Society, \$50,000 to the Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth in Calgary, and another \$100,000 to the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society.

In our business plan we clarify this ministry's role as providing expert advice, guidance, and specialized knowledge to other government ministries to be sure indigenous perspectives are heard in the development, implementation, and monitoring of policies, programs, and initiatives and to support engagement with indigenous communities. I would like to highlight some important ways in which Indigenous Relations fulfilled that mandate this year by making sure indigenous perspectives were taken into account. These are changes that did not involve an outlay of funds from the ministry, and each takes a distinct approach to preserve lives and livelihoods. As we partner in prosperity, we need to acknowledge the many ways this happens.

9:10

The first has been our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, Budget 2021 continues this approach with a focus on health care and on jobs. We are increasing spending in health care and allocating funds to fight the pandemic. Our work, which started right at the beginning of COVID-19 infections in Alberta, remains ongoing. When it comes to Indigenous Relations, we are focused on making sure indigenous people in Alberta have access to timely and accurate information about the pandemic and information on available options and supports.

We have been and continue to work daily to ensure we are listening to what individual communities need. For example, when certain communities needed the province to intervene so they could set up community checkpoints on provincial roads, they spoke with me, and I worked with the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to make sure these checkpoints could be set up safely, without interference. We also participated in meetings with the federal government along with Alberta Health Services to look at what we could do to improve outcomes by making sure we listened to communities and could address and support their specific needs. Work continues to be done across government, through the vaccine deployment, to be sure people have the accurate information they need to stay safe and to get their businesses operating safely through provincial and federal financial grants.

It's been an extremely hard year for people in Alberta, and when we look to employment rates, it has been exceptionally difficult for indigenous people in and out of communities. One major employer, First Nations casinos, has been closed for the better part of the year. The five casinos in Alberta run by First Nations keep a lot of people working in good jobs. That's one part of it. They're also the source of social and economic development funding at local levels through the First Nations development fund. Revenues from provincially

owned slot machines in these casinos fund this program. This is administered by Alberta's government so that all participating First Nations can get grants. It's an amazing program, but projected revenues are down because of the long closure. The sooner we can get spaces safe again, the sooner First Nation communities will benefit, and I can tell you that people in Alberta are largely doing the right things to make this real.

Right now the projections are down about \$50 million, but we remain hopeful. The Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis commission forecasts look very strong, actually. With successful mass vaccination, gaming revenue is expected to recover relatively quickly and grow. A \$43 million increase is projected for 2021-22, up from the 2020-21 forecast. These are funds that are going to help communities provide the services people truly need. Until then, I continue to work with the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance on this file.

Around this time last year I had the privilege of standing up with my colleague the Hon. Leela Aheer, Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, to launch the Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls along with the newly appointed members. This group of four indigenous women, who have personal experience working to improve social and economic conditions, joins three MLAs with indigenous populations in their constituencies. Together they are working hard to show Alberta's government a path to safety for indigenous girls and women and two-spirited people to feel safe. This subject matter is very dear to me, and the more I'm involved with it, the more I want to see drastic change for the better.

In government Indigenous Relations, Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, and Justice and Solicitor General are all involved in this work. Through the committee we also include the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, First Nations and Métis women's councils on economic security, indigenous communities, families of missing and murdered women and girls, advocates, and allies. Under my ministry's leadership the Alberta government connects regularly with the governments of Canada and other provinces and territories so we can move forward together, even if our approach ends up being a little bit different. I'm proud of the critical work my team is doing to preserve lives.

Critical work continues as well on keeping livelihoods intact through natural resource development. As you can imagine, development activities are down in the past year. That is understandable as companies and communities need time to figure out how to keep people safe while getting the work done. My ministry also responded to this work of supporting industry and indigenous people by providing consultation pauses and then timeline extensions to be sure indigenous communities could prioritize the work of getting their spaces and their people safe first. Still, more than 5,300 preconsultation assessments have happened so far in this fiscal year, with another 1,000 adequacy assessments contributing to Alberta's and local economies when we need it the most.

Last year about this time the Minister of Energy launched a program that would prove to be a boon for indigenous business. The site rehabilitation program has been a successful way to close off oil and gas sites throughout the province and to be sure communities with sites that needed to be remediated could get some support. Working with the indigenous resource council, my staff also helped to co-ordinate ways to bring indigenous voices to that table. The Energy ministry has been an extraordinary partner in this work, creating a \$100 million grant allotment specifically for First Nations and Métis settlements to do the work with licensees to close sites located on or near their lands. The value is in reclaiming lands

and making them safe again and making it possible for future generations to use the land in traditional ways.

For Alberta's government, the commitment to work across government for the benefit of indigenous people is one we take seriously, and it drives us to do the hard work of looking at the resources we have and planning to be as smart with them as possible. These decisions have a long horizon, just like the work done to limit the COVID-19 pandemic or to connect communities with work through the site rehabilitation program. My ministry will continue the immediate work of ensuring communities are set up for long-term success. Instead of focusing our ministry alone, we are collaborating to get the work done.

Thank you for the time this morning, and I welcome your questions and your comments.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much, Minister.

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 that you're aware of the time. Would you like to combine your time with the minister?

Mr. Feehan: I would, please.

The Chair: If that's acceptable to the minister?

Mr. Wilson: Yes.

The Chair: Back and forth. Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Feehan.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Minister, for your words. I always like to hear what you are up to and always pleased to hear if there are things that are helping to move the indigenous community forward. I just want to express my appreciation for all the work that you've put in over the year in preparation for these estimates. I know your staff work extremely long hours to make sure that the information for the estimates is put together well. I've seen the work that they do, so I just want to extend my appreciation to all of them for helping to prepare us for this time.

I have, you know, quite a series of questions to ask you. I guess that, overall, my concern is going to be that there's been a significant diminishment of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations over the last number of years. You know, this year in particular, if we look at the forecast for 2021, we can see that the amount of money in this department has been, really, at a low for many, many years and is only expected to go up in our estimates because of monies that are not related to the provincial government; for example, monies from transfers from the government of Canada and the monies for the First Nations development fund. If you were to actually extract those from the budget, we would see that the budget for IR has decreased dramatically over this year and over the last two years.

Mostly what I want to do today is just come to an understanding about that. You don't seem to be having any luck with Treasury Board and Finance in terms of financing things in the department. I notice that you only made reference during your speech not to monies put in by the Department of Indigenous Relations but monies that you've indicated were put in by other departments. You spoke, for example, about money put into health care by the government at large, and you spoke about money put in by Energy for First Nations to work with businesses to work on consultation.

I know that it makes sense that if nothing is happening in your ministry, you want to make sure that we all understand that your department works with other departments and that sometimes the money that flows through the indigenous community actually

comes from other budgets. I'm glad you opened the door to talking about those other budgets a little bit in your initial speech. I also know that that's reflected in your business plan, where in the third paragraph on page 57 you say in your business plan, "The ministry provides expert advice, guidance, and specialized knowledge to other government ministries to be sure Indigenous perspectives are heard in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies, programs and initiatives, and to support engagement with Indigenous communities." Minister, I know it's a silly question, but I assume that you stand by that statement.

Mr. Wilson: Absolutely.

Mr. Feehan: I appreciate that. I just wanted to speak to that because the reality is that a certain amount of the time in each of your budget line items is not spent implementing programs within the Ministry of Indigenous Relations but is in consulting with other ministries to ensure that they are working with the indigenous people. Is that fair to say, Minister?

Mr. Wilson: Yes.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. As we speak about the things that are happening, we can try to identify how much time and energy is spent, you know, in each of those areas outside of your own ministry if it's necessary to do that. So thank you.

9:20

You know, let's just start with some of the really simple stuff, things that I don't think are particularly challenging. Not everything has changed dramatically in the last year. Perhaps we can just start with the ministry support services budget – that is, the budget for your office, essentially – and the supports offered by the department to your office. I notice it hasn't changed particularly dramatically, a small decrease, but perhaps you can start by telling me: has there actually been a decrease in the number of positions within the ministry office over the last year?

Mr. Wilson: Actually within my office in the Legislature? Is that what you're talking about?

Mr. Feehan: Yes.

Mr. Wilson: That's remained constant.

Mr. Feehan: That's stayed the same, so there was no job loss in the minister's office. Okay.

Perhaps, then, you can also tell me a little bit about the number of jobs that have been lost across your whole department represented by this budget. Can you tell me how many jobs have been lost in the last year?

Mr. Wilson: I'll maybe let my deputy minister speak to that. That's more in his bailiwick. He's going to step to the mic.

Mr. Young: Hi. It's Donavon Young, the Deputy Minister of Indigenous Relations. A decrease of 26 FTEs in the Department of Indigenous Relations from '20-21 to '21-22, which represents about 12.5 per cent. We went from 201 in '20-21 to 175 for the upcoming fiscal year. Most of those reductions are through attrition. As the minister mentioned in his opening remarks, we've taken a very careful and prudent approach to vacancy management. We ask ourselves, "What are the critical positions that must be filled?" and we fill those, but if we can align resources and so on, we do that. We also continue to sort of tweak our structure within the ministry to save, especially on some management positions. Again, as

managers leave, retire, move on, we have pretty much taken the view of really trying not to fill those positions. But in answer to your question, Mr. Feehan, a 26 FTE reduction in Budget '21.

Mr. Feehan: Mr. Young, while you're just at the microphone now, can you tell me if this 12.5 per cent is greater or less than the reduction that occurred last year, in the previous year?

Mr. Young: It's a little less, I believe, because in total, over the two fiscal years since Budget 2019, we're down about 25 per cent. That's actually, you know, pretty much an even split, 12 and a half per cent this year and probably 12 and a half, 13 per cent the year before. We're down about 25 or 26 per cent in total.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Young. I appreciate that information.

Minister, I wonder if you can just speak to this loss of 25 per cent of your ministry over the last two years and tell me about the functions that would have been performed by 25 per cent of your staff. That's a fairly dramatic slash to any corporation, and I wonder if you can just tell me about what kind of services for the indigenous community you're no longer performing given the loss of 25 per cent of your staff since you've been minister.

Mr. Wilson: I'll let Donavon speak to that again, but just to let you know, we're actually getting all of the work done that needs to be done. We've streamlined the operation. Everybody is working really hard. We've got a great staff over there, as you know – you've worked with them – and they do an amazing job for us over there. We've been very, very fortunate to keep some of our long-term people there. In other ministries they would maybe move on, but they seem to stay at Indigenous Relations, so we're very happy that they do that. We've attracted some really good new people into our finance department and working with the Métis settlements. I'm really pleased with the way we've been able to attract and retain people.

There have been some positions that through attrition – and we started that right from the very start. I knew that we needed to save some money, so right from when I first got in there, we started working with attrition. If positions were vacant and it seemed that we were able to get by without those positions, we didn't fill those. That's where most of our savings have come from, so there's really been no change to our operation, what we would do to help the indigenous and Métis people as far as that goes. All of those programs are running. Our budget is intact. All of our grants are intact. The staff has done an amazing job with that.

I'll maybe let Donavon speak to that a little bit as well because he works daily with those people.

Mr. Feehan: I'm happy to hear from Mr. Young, but I'm just interested in your comments. You indicated that you lost 25 per cent of your staff but that it hasn't changed at all the work that has been done for the community. I'm just wondering what you're implying about the staff that were there before. Were they not working?

Mr. Wilson: Like I say, well, people move on. I mean, they retire, and they move on to various different positions. As they moved, some of those positions weren't filled.

Donavon works more specifically with the people in that office, so I'll maybe let him speak to that.

Mr. Young: Thank you. Of that 25 per cent, the largest percentage would have come in Budget 2019 with the climate leadership initiative that the government no longer pursued. I believe, Mr. Feehan, there were about 11 or 12 staff who worked on climate

leadership, and those were temp sals. When they came to an end, they left.

Just to sort of expand on maybe a point you made a little bit earlier around realignment and streamlining of services, I'll give you a good example. We've been very careful not to impact as much as possible program areas. For instance, on the administration, corporate finance, and planning, you know, we used to have a separate unit that did corporate planning, the business plan, and so on and a separate unit doing financial services and so on, so we did some alignment there and combined those functions. A lot of the savings have been through that alignment and streamlining around administration, corporate services, business planning, and so on. It's mostly a great deal on the management side.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Young. I appreciate that.

I see that in the previous year you lost a specific program, the indigenous climate leadership program, and that accounted for the vast majority of the people lost. This year no programs have been lost, yet you still lost the same number of staff. I'm just happy to move on from that. I appreciate hearing about this. It must be tough for you to watch everything diminish in this way.

Perhaps I can ask you a little bit about the consultation, land, and policy section of your budget. I noticed that since 2019 you've lost almost \$17 million from that budget, which represents about 53 per cent of that budget, a pretty devastating cut to that budget, and it, of course, would represent a significant devaluing of the work in that division. As it seems that consultation, land, and policy is no longer valued in the same way, perhaps you can tell me about what outcomes you are no longer seeking to achieve in that division.

Mr. Wilson: Could you just clarify what page number and line you're referring to there?

Mr. Feehan: I think that if you look at the budget on page 131, you'll see that consultation, land, and policy has gone on that line from \$31 million, well, almost \$32 million in the 2019-2020 budget to \$15 million in the '21-22 budget, representing, as I say, a decrease of approximately 53 per cent of the budget.

Mr. Wilson: We're just pulling that paperwork up there. Just give me a second if you don't mind.

I'm going to get you to clarify that. We're not quite sure what you're referring to on the reduction there.

Mr. Feehan: I'm on page 131, and I'm looking at the budget for consultation, land, and policy. In the 2019-20 actuals you have the budget as almost \$32 million, and in the estimate for this year you have it at \$15 million. Can you explain the nature of the drop of 53 per cent?

9:30

Mr. Wilson: I think Donavon is going to speak to that one.

Mr. Young: Mr. Feehan, if I understand correctly, you're actually looking at Budget 2018-19 compared to Budget '21, the current year. Over two years you're right: that consultation has dipped on the consultation funding. But if you recall, at the very end of 2018-19 the previous administration provided a one-time only funding of consultation capacity of \$20 million, I believe, at the very end of 2018-19. The government coming in in 2019-20 went back to its historical funding levels of \$6 million for consultation funding. So I think that's what you're referring to, the one-time funding provided in 2019-19 of \$20 million just before the election, and budget 2019-2020 did not maintain that \$20 million. We went back

to the historical funding level because that was only a one-year increase. We went back to \$6 million, the government did, for consultation capacity. I believe that's what you're referring to because there really has not been a major change in terms of, you know, staffing or anything. I think you're referring to that consultation capacity funding provided just before the last election.

Mr. Feehan: Mr. Young or perhaps Minister – I'm not sure who you wish to answer this – what you're indicating, then, is that after the consultations that were done around the consultation process, a decision was made to increase funding for the First Nations communities by the amount of \$20 million. You're characterizing that as a one-time funding now, but that's only because when the present government came in, they chose not to continue the ongoing \$20 million. Is that right?

Mr. Wilson: Actually, no. What you had put in place was that they had to meet specific guidelines to achieve those target dollars, so we made sure that all of the things were put in place. They had to increase capacity in their offices, and it allowed them to get computers and all those sorts of things. As they met those guidelines, they were paid out on that, and once all of those items were considered and paid out, then that program actually ended, and we went back to the traditional funding that was in place.

Mr. Feehan: Well, I won't rewrite history, but it seems to me that what you're saying is that you have made a decision to not continue the \$20 million per year for consultation for the First Nations. Is that correct?

Mr. Wilson: That was actually done last year. As you remember, we discussed that in last year's estimates. Like I said, those things, we felt, were one-time, the way that the budget had been set up, because there were specific targets that the First Nations had to meet to get that money. It wasn't just a guarantee that they were going to get that \$20 million. As they met those targets, we followed it very carefully, and if they followed it – actually, every one of them met the targets, so the entire amount was paid out. But once those targets were met, well, then that program no longer existed, so we went back. They always got that on top of their traditional funding for consultation.

Mr. Feehan: So to understand this as a decision to go to historic lower levels of funding for consultation: there has been no increase for indigenous communities for consultation under this budget. Is that correct?

Mr. Wilson: Not specifically to each nation, but we did increase one. We do have the one Métis settlement that did meet the credible assertion, and they are now included in that as well.

Mr. Feehan: Can I ask you: which Métis settlement?

Mr. Wilson: That's the Fort McKay Métis.

Mr. Feehan: Oh, Fort McKay. Okay. Thank you very much, Minister. I appreciate that.

Perhaps we can move on a little bit to talk about the land and legal settlement division. I can see that the funds this year were essentially, well, almost completely gone, moving from the previous estimate of \$7.7 million down to just \$500,000. Can you tell me: is that just because there were simply no land claim settlements made in the last year?

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. As you realize, the TLEs are ongoing, and if one was to complete, we would have to go back to cabinet to get

funding for that. That money would be available if we needed it, but at this point I think – Donavon, you wanted to speak to that a little bit?

Mr. Young: Yes. Thank you, Minister. Mr. Feehan, I think that you're referring, actually, to the forecast for '20-21 of \$500,000. That's the second-quarter forecast for the previous fiscal year. The more accurate comparison, if you will, is if you look at Budget '20-21, as you said, \$7,670,000, and Budget '21-22, \$8,300,000. It's not a decrease from budget year to budget year; it's actually, you know, a small increase. It really speaks to big, strong treaty land entitlement and the implementation costs associated with that that we reprofiled from last fiscal year to this fiscal year because we're still in that implementation phase. I just want to draw your attention to Budget '20-21, \$7.6 million, and Budget '21-22, \$8.3 million. That \$500,000 is the estimate from the second quarter of this fiscal year. Does that make sense?

Mr. Feehan: I do understand, yes. Thank you. I see that the number is up this year about the same as the budget last time. I was wondering if it just meant that there was no claim settled within the last year, anticipating that it would be in the future year. It sounds like you have one TLE that you were working on this last year. Minister, can you tell me a little bit about it? This was Bigstone TLE.

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. You're kind of breaking up a little bit. We just have the one claim that's ongoing.

Mr. Young: Thanks for the question. There are, you know, currently three or four treaty land entitlement claims that we're working on. But they're not reflected in the budget because, as you know, those negotiations take a couple of years, so those are down the road. That money in the budget year '21-22 is for the implementation of the Bigstone TLE claim, and that really is around third-party costs. It's around some remediation of land that has to take place before it's transferred over from Alberta to Canada and then Canada to the First Nation, so those are really the implementation costs for Bigstone. There were no land claim entitlements in the year that we're in, '20-21, and we're not really forecasting one for '21-22. As you know, Lubicon was the year before.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you.

Can you just tell me a little bit about which lands the Bigstone TLE was covering?

Mr. Young: Well, I'm not sure what you mean by that, which lands. It was a total of 140,000 acres. I'm doing that by memory, but I think I'm correct. There were 140,000 acres that were transferred, again, you know, 10 years ago, at least in the agreement, from Alberta to Canada, but it is taking a number of years because at first Alberta had to have the land surveyed. If you're asking which lands, as I say, about 140,000 acres of land were transferred. Does that answer your question, sir?

Mr. Feehan: Right. I just wanted to make sure. I understood that it was the same land that was under negotiation for the last number of years, that it wasn't a new section of land, that this is a continuation of work that's been happening, as you say, for 10 years.

Mr. Young: Correct.

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

Let me just ask about the status of the other TLEs. I don't know, Mr. Young, if you need to answer this or if the minister can. You

identified that there are three or four other TLEs. I know some of them, and I just wonder if you might tell me the status of some of those. For example, the Beaver First Nation has a TLE. Do you anticipate any resolution or any movement forward on that TLE in this year?

9:40

Mr. Young: I'm just getting the update. You're right. Beaver First Nation is coming close. Their land selections were vetted by the departments of Environment and Parks, Energy, and Transportation in the fall of 2019, so we are getting closer to Beaver. I'm not sure if we'll get there this fiscal year, '21-22. We're also dealing with Fort McMurray First Nation and a selection of about 15,000 acres of land for Fort McMurray, and we've just started discussions with the Stoney tribe and with Suncchild, I believe. Doig River, which is, you know, in the far north – really, the home reserve is in British Columbia – that one is quite close, but they do have a land selection in Alberta. Yeah. Good progress is being made on about four or five different fronts around treaty land entitlement.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Young.

I'm just wondering. There was concern from the Beaver First Nation – and perhaps it will affect some of the others – that there was an intention to sell some Crown land in their traditional territory and that it would influence their ability to complete their TLE. Perhaps you could tell me a little bit. Has there been a decision by this government to sell Crown land in the traditional territories of the Beaver First Nation, and did that exclude that land from the TLE for the Beaver First Nation?

Mr. Wilson: I don't believe there have been any decisions on selling Crown land there at all.

Mr. Feehan: Okay. So the government . . .

Mr. Wilson: All stages are done at the federal level first, and then it comes back to Alberta to decide which lands we can agree on to make those decisions. Every land sale exchange transaction includes an assessment of whether consultation is required, and that's the work that the ministry manages through the aboriginal consultation office. The consultation may reveal a Crown duty to accommodate First Nations and Métis settlements, and we do this to avoid and minimize and mitigate adverse impacts on a Crown decision. Consultation, as you know, lasts for many years to work through the complex issues that need to be addressed throughout the process. The big one was the example of the Mackenzie county, and that decision was made prior to this government to sell some public land, but that's the only one I'm aware of.

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

Can you tell me what percentage of staffing has been lost in this land and legal settlement division over the last year?

Mr. Wilson: I believe the answer is zero.

Mr. Feehan: So that division has remained essentially the same. Okay. I appreciate the information. Thank you, Minister.

Perhaps we can move on to the line on page 131 regarding the climate change initiatives. I see, of course, that there has, as predicted, been the complete extinguishment of the climate change initiatives. When we spoke last year, I was asking you to identify what percentage of the First Nations had participated in that program and what percentage of the Métis settlements had participated in that program, and you were unable to do that at the time; however, I did receive information subsequently in writing from your department that identified that a hundred per cent of the

First Nations and a hundred per cent of the Métis settlements had participated in that program. I want to say thank you for the follow-up from our last conversations about the climate change initiative. I guess I'm just wondering whether there has been any consideration to developing anything in this area or if we're going to see this completely removed from the budget as of next year, that it will be no longer part of our past actuals. Is there any plan to move forward on this at all?

Mr. Wilson: Well, actually, what we've come up with – and I've spoken to you about this before – is the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, and under that program, which is much larger than what the climate initiative was, this is a very broad program to help First Nations and indigenous and Métis people become partners in prosperity with Alberta on some bigger programs. Under this program: it's a resource-based program, so it can include oil and gas, of course, and forestry and mining and also renewables. Within that you could see a renewable project proceed there. We're vetting very carefully to make sure that they are good projects going forward. They have to be a viable project because what we're doing is backstopping in that. Of course, we don't want to lose money there, and we want the First Nations and Métis people to be very successful in this. So we've been very careful on vetting these projects.

You'll hear me talk of this. When we go down to southern Alberta, the chiefs down there tell me: we don't have oil and gas, but we do have water and wind. They're very cognizant of projects down there. A lot of them, when you stand and look on their land, said: "Minister, look. You see all those windmills?" I said: "Yeah. You're doing good." He says: "No. None of those are on our land." It's kind of surprising. Like, they've kind of just skirted around some of the First Nation land on there. There could be projects coming forward like that, but, like I say, we're going to vet them to make sure that they are good programs and viable programs and they can help them into the future to help their people.

As you probably remember, in the fall last year we did our first announcement with the AIOC. It was a very large project. It was a 1 and a half billion dollar project out by Hinton to construct a power plant out there. We backstopped six First Nations on that, to the tune of just under \$100 million. They are full partners in this project now, and that's going to provide 8 per cent of Alberta's power just in that one plant, using good, clean Alberta natural gas. That's going to put, I believe, about 600 people to work just constructing the plant.

There were a couple of First Nations that were involved in that, and we asked them if they would help out some others because they work at various levels. Some of them are very sophisticated, some of them maybe not quite as sophisticated. They worked together, and we actually were able to bring in six First Nations in that project that are working together to provide power for the grid. That's going to be a great program. Right now, as we speak, one of the First Nations is out there. They've got their own equipment – they've got Cats, trackhoes, the whole line of equipment – and they're preparing the ground for this spring to get to work. It's really exciting to see that program start to take off. It will really provide – like, going into the future, the amount of money they're going to get off that far substantiates what they would get from grants.

It's good to see these programs working, and we're vetting them all the time. I'm not sure even how many. I think we've got over 150 projects that have been brought forward to the AIOC board at this time. It's a great board. It's based on some very capable businesspeople, some of the best people in Alberta, the businesspeople. As well, we've got some great indigenous people on there

that sit on the board. Our CEO is a First Nations lady who's heading the ship there, and they're just doing amazing work. I'm just excited to be able to start rolling out some more programs this spring around . . .

Mr. Feehan: Minister, I appreciate your enthusiasm about this program. I guess that when you've lost all the others, it's good to be happy about one. Of course, you know, this is one that I support fully. We, of course, voted for this program in the House, so I'm very happy to hear. I certainly would love to know a little bit more about the program. I'm aware, of course, from publicity that there was one contract signed, as you mentioned today, this \$1.5 billion power plant based on natural gas in the Hinton area, that involves six nations. This is going to be a chance for you to shine a bit. I actually am quite interested in this and other things that have happened here. I'd like to start by just asking: can you list the six nations that have been involved in that particular power plant project?

Mr. Wilson: Just off the top of my head – I'll start while they're pulling up the list there – of course, Enoch is one of them. They were the lead on that. Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation: they're the ones that are on the ground right now. They've got a great team out there. They do a lot of work in the oil patch area. Enoch, of course, like I said; O'Chiese is one of them as well; Paul First Nation; Kehewin Nation; and Whitefish (Goodfish). They're all benefiting from this project, and it was great to see them come together as a team, starting out with one and building from there to get up to six First Nations that are all working together in partnership there.

9:50

Mr. Feehan: They're all nations in the Treaty 6 territory, I see? Okay. Great. Thank you.

Sorry. We're getting feedback, so sometimes it's hard to tell whether or not you're trying to say a bit more or not. I'm wondering if you could tell me: you said that it was a \$1.5 billion project and that the total of the six nations' involvement is about \$100 million, so less than 0.01 per cent. I was wondering if you could just tell me a little bit about Enoch. If I'm wrong, that's okay. This is a great chance to clarify that. If you could just go through the six nations and tell me what percentage of the overall project is now under the ownership of these First Nations.

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. I can't get into the specifics on that, of course, because it's a private business deal amongst them, but you are right on the numbers. It was approximately a \$1.5 billion project, and I think our actual participation was \$97.3 million, just shy of \$100 million. How their actual percentages work out: that was left up to them to decide because we don't interfere with them on that level. As you know, the board is an arm's-length board, and we can't be interfering with their business on that.

It was a great project, and like I say, we do have several others that are very close to coming off and being announced very shortly. The magnitude of the projects is able to put a lot of people to work and create a lot of employment, not just for the First Nations but for surrounding communities as well. It helps everybody, and that's the beauty of it. Working together, we can all be partners in this.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Minister. I certainly hope these projects are successful. I am very pleased to hear that the First Nations are involved even if it is in such a minor way on such big projects. I'm happy to hear that.

Can you tell me: has there been a second contract signed under the AIOC at this time?

Mr. Wilson: I can't get into the actual details because, of course, they will be announced shortly, but there are, like I say, several very good projects that are being vetted as we speak. We'll be looking forward . . .

Mr. Feehan: So there's the potential, but what you're saying is – sorry. This echo is making it hard to talk with you in a respectful way.

I just want to identify that there is potential for things to happen in the future, and I certainly hope they do. If there's anything I can do to support that, I certainly would like to do that. But at this point you can say that your project has been successful with one project involving six out of the 48 First Nations and none of the Métis settlements. Is that correct?

Mr. Wilson: At this time, yes, but as we move forward, you'll see some very exciting things coming forward.

Mr. Feehan: I certainly hope so. Thank you very much.

Can you tell me: are the Métis settlements eligible for this particular program?

Mr. Wilson: Yes, they are, actually. I know they are working on some very good projects as we speak.

Mr. Feehan: Hopefully, something will happen at some point in the future, perhaps.

Mr. Wilson: A question I get a lot, because they are concerned, is: if they're involved in one project, can they get involved in another? There is no limit. Like, if they find a great project and they find somebody to partner up with and that one moves forward and they're successful, they can apply for another one.

Mr. Feehan: Minister, one of the things that came up in my conversations with many of the First Nations and the Métis settlements is that they were not as wealthy as some of the nations that have been involved in these projects, don't have the money to put up front into these kinds of projects, that you need to have a certain level of cash available. Can you tell me what kind of cash nations need to have available up front in order to participate in these types of projects?

Mr. Wilson: That's the beauty of this program. They can literally go in no money down. This is a beautiful program. It's zero risk for the settlements or the Métis nation as well or the First Nations people. They can come in, no money down, participate. We do have some thresholds. What we're looking for is a minimum \$20 million involvement with the indigenous people. They partner if they have a partner going with them, or they can do it on their own, but if they are bringing in a partner, the partner has to be able to have some flesh in the game here, too.

Mr. Feehan: So you're saying that there is no cash up front, but they must commit to indebteding themselves \$20 million in their participation in the project. Is that correct?

Mr. Wilson: The beauty of that is that with the Alberta government backing them, there is zero risk to them because the government is backing them. As you know, you can't put a First Nation or Métis settlement up for collateral, so it's made it very difficult for them to get involved in some of the bigger projects over the years. If they do, they're using very high interest rates, which makes most projects not very viable. By doing this, they're able to use the power of the government to get a loan that's more reasonable, and it makes

the projects a lot more viable. That's the beauty of it, getting involved in bigger projects.

Mr. Feehan: I'm a bit confused, then, Minister, why a number of the nations would have told me that they found it impossible to participate given that they didn't have the wherewithal to reach the minimal standards, particularly the poorer nations. You know, Enoch, of course, is going to be able to do \$20 million with their eyes closed, but some of the poorer nations that were able to participate in the previous climate leadership initiative, for example, aren't able to participate here. I'm just wondering what you're doing to ensure the participation of the smaller, less cash-liquid nations.

Mr. Wilson: That's a great question because we did consider that, too. We know that some nations, like you say, are more sophisticated than others. They have economic development people and lawyers on staff, so they can get involved in the bigger projects. That's the beauty of this program: we can involve everybody. We've been trying to educate as much as we can, and what we have done is that we've got – another function of the AIOC Board is to have capacity funding there, and that funding is to help them build their business plan, because, like you say, some don't have that ability to have that in-house to look at some of these bigger projects, to vet them to make sure that they are going to be good, viable projects for them. We'll assist them at that level, too, through the AIOC Board. There's capacity funding there. We just actually brought a couple more people onboard through the AIOC that will be going out into the community and working with them and helping them to vet projects and make sure that they understand how the projects work and that there really is zero risk to them.

Mr. Feehan: Excellent. You know, I'm certainly behind this project, so I'm not trying to stick you in a corner. I'm trying to make sure that you're really helping the nations, particularly those that could need help.

You mentioned that there is capacity funding. Can you identify how much money from this line item on page 131 has been actually designated toward capacity, and can you list the nations that have received the capacity money?

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. There's approximately \$6 million there, but the board decides how that gets spent, whether it's on salaries or actually putting business plans together. The board is in charge of those capacity dollars. I've spoken with the CEO there, Alicia Dubois, a very, very intelligent lady. We were very lucky to attract such a high-level person to run the organization. Because she is indigenous as well, she understands that there are issues around understanding, getting into some of these bigger projects, so that's why she's developing this program to reach out to the First Nations and Métis people to help them understand how the program really works for them and help them develop that capacity and put the business plans together.

My office for the last two years has been like the *Dragons' Den* on TV. All the businesses have been coming forward to us, and now that the board is in place, we can steer them over to them. They're getting literally hundreds of businesses coming forward that want to participate in this program because they see the benefit of it. They're now able to start prevetting some of the projects that are out there and looking at which First Nations or Métis people would fit together and could form a good partnership to make a successful business.

Mr. Feehan: Let me go back to the question that I asked, then. I'm happy to hear all the, you know, positives about it. The question was: beyond the fact that there is generally about \$6 million in capacity monies for 48 nations, can you tell me how much capacity money goes to any particular nation?

Mr. Wilson: No. The board will make that decision, but it's going to be based on the type of project. As well, some projects are going to be a lot more complicated and complex, so of course they're going to require more vetting and looking at to make sure . . .

Mr. Feehan: Sorry. Can you tell me how many of the 48 First Nations have received capacity money?

10:00

Mr. Wilson: No, as I say, the board decides how they work that, so what their actual numbers are I'm not sure.

Mr. Feehan: Is there a requirement that this board report to the minister in terms of the use of the monies that are designated for the board's spending?

Mr. Wilson: We're talking about the capacity funding here a little bit. It's not like the consultation, where everybody gets \$100,000 for consultation. Under this program it's based on the deals that come through the door. If a deal comes through the door and they're working on it, that's how they'll decide how much capacity goes into it and how much staff and time they have to put into it. There's no set number as to each nation or each Metis settlement getting X amount of capacity funding. The board will decide that based on a per-deal basis.

Mr. Feehan: My next question was, then: is there a responsibility of the board to report to the minister for the use of the monies that they are given under this budget?

Mr. Wilson: Absolutely. Actually, my deputy minister sits on the board ex officio as well.

Mr. Feehan: Will that include a definition of which nations have been involved and how much capacity money has been given to each of those nations that are involved?

Mr. Wilson: Like I said, it's going to be based on a one-by-one basis as to how the deals go out, so we don't have the exact numbers as to . . .

Mr. Feehan: Yeah, Minister. You are responsible for this budget. You've given this money to them, and I'm asking if they are to report back to you what they have done with the money. You seem to have indicated that, yes, they have. Now I'm asking you if in the reporting they have reported which nations have received how much money.

Mr. Wilson: Like I said, for the first project that's gone out the door, where we had the first six First Nations in there, they did receive capacity funding. I don't know, I can't give you the exact amount per nation, how much was spent on that, but it's spread out between actually helping develop business plans, doing the vetting, looking at the legal work, because when you're talking a billion and a half dollar project, you can imagine the amount of work that has to go in to make sure that . . .

Mr. Feehan: I appreciate that the projects themselves are very large, Minister. Since you seemed to answer my questions, I would just like to ask that the department provide the opposition with a list of any reports coming from the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities

Corporation about the use of the money that has been allocated to them in this budget, including which nations have been involved in the project and who have received the funding. It can identify how much funding went to each individual nation. That information can be sent to me in writing later.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Wilson: What they do is on their annual reports they report . . .

The Chair: Minister, if I could interrupt, I think the minister has made it quite clear that because of the commercial deals that have been made, he can't divulge to you what the amounts are. I'm sure the minister will give you as much information as he can at that time, but it may be some confidential stuff.

Mr. Feehan: Are you suggesting that the people of Alberta cannot know how the \$8.5 million dollars is being spent?

Mr. Wilson: If you wouldn't mind, when the annual report comes out, you will certainly get a copy of it and any other information that we can get to you. We will certainly do that.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I think that may have to do for now. Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that.

Minister, you've indicated that this money is very narrow in terms of its focus. You indicated that it could be spent on oil, gas, forestry, and then you subsequently mentioned renewables. Can you tell me: has any money in this last year been spent on a renewables project from the AIOC?

Mr. Wilson: No. Just like we've said, the one project has been approved at this point. Others are being vetted. If they come forward, and it's a viable project, then of course they'll look at it and decide whether it'll go forward or not. But to date there's just been the one project. That's the power plant with the natural gas. That also includes – I think you left out mining. That's included as well at this point.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I did. I appreciate that.

Right now it seems like the focus is very narrow. I certainly look forward to next year to ask you to see if there's been some success in any broader areas besides, well, apparently just gas, not even forestry or mining at this particular time.

But perhaps we can move on, Minister, as I'm slowly eating through my time. Perhaps if I could do a time check.

The Chair: Eleven minutes.

Mr. Feehan: Eleven minutes. Thank you.

Minister, let's just talk for a moment about the protocol agreements that you have. You identified that you had hoped to sign two new protocol agreements in the last year, and I think, indeed, that you have signed two new agreements, with Treaty 6 and the Stoney Nakoda First Nations. Let me just make sure I've got my information clear. Is that correct? Have you signed two new agreements this year?

Mr. Wilson: Yes. Since taking office, we've signed, actually, three protocol agreements. That reflects our government's partnership with the First Nations, as you know. As you know, they're a formal way to do meaningful discussions and share information, explore these issues, anything from education to environment to land and economic development. We have signed a renewed agreement with the Blackfoot Confederacy in 2019, entered into agreements with Stoney Nakoda, Tsuut'ina Tribal Council, and the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations.

Mr. Feehan: Now, your business plan indicated that your objective was to sign four. I'm assuming the fourth one was the previously existent Treaty 8 protocol agreement. Can you tell me the status of the Treaty 8 protocol agreement?

Mr. Wilson: Well, we're working on the Treaty 8 one right now to do that renewed relationship agreement. That one is addressing concerns about treaty rights and recognition. We're also working together in the spirit of respect and partnership to meet our share of economic growth and priorities. That one is in the works as we speak.

Mr. Feehan: Okay. Can you tell me: are there any outcome reports about what has been achieved under these three protocol agreements in the last year?

Mr. Wilson: Yes. What I've done, just to make sure that they stay live agreements – because otherwise some of these things can get tabled and forgotten about. What we're doing is that once a month now I have various ministries report back, and we meet with the treaty organization to look at what their specific table is. It might be anything from children's services, community services, transportation. Depending on those issues – like, of course, different areas have different issues of concern, so we try to pick what are their more specific areas of concern and work through those. Over the next year we'll be having monthly meetings with all of our partners in this and going through the protocol agreement to make sure that the document stays live.

Mr. Feehan: Right. Will there be a report about outcomes that will be available to the public about what the benefit of these protocol agreements were?

Mr. Wilson: Yes. I'm just looking over at Don there, and he's assuring me that there will be.

Mr. Feehan: Okay. I'll just simply ask the department to forward any of the reports about the successes of the protocol agreements to our offices when they have an opportunity to do that.

I'm just wondering if any ...

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. They're important to the First Nations we've signed these with, and we've done some really exciting things around this. The Premier loves coming out to these things and being involved with it because he has a very close tie with the First Nations people.

The signing that we did on the Blackfoot Crossing was very exciting. We spent the full day down there with them. They've got a beautiful facility down there, as you know, looking over the valley where the treaty was originally signed.

Then the one we did with the Tsuut'ina and Stoney Nakoda: we're working on that. I don't know if you've seen this yet, but they did a buffalo hide, and they had it laser etched, like, if you can imagine an eight-by-six full buffalo robe that's got the agreement laser etched into it. We're just building a case to display it right now. Once we get that on display, it's going to be quite amazing to see, actually. I think you'll be very impressed with that.

Mr. Feehan: Great. I will be happy to go and read it, Minister. I appreciate that.

Can you tell me: the protocol agreements are covered under which section of the budget? Which division is responsible? Is it the First Nations and Métis relations?

Mr. Wilson: FNMR is the one that's in charge of that. That'd be Don. First Nations and Métis relations; sorry.

Mr. Feehan: Can you tell me: has there been a decrease in staffing in the First Nations and Métis relations department over the last year?

Mr. Wilson: I'll just have to check on that. Give me a second.

Mr. Feehan: Particularly an answer to the question of the number of staff dedicated toward the protocol agreements – has that changed in the last year? – as well as the original question.

10:10

Mr. Wilson: There has been some attrition. Apparently, five people through attrition, but the bulk of the people are still doing their — no. Oh, specifically on protocols it's the exact same number, apparently.

Mr. Feehan: So you lost five people from the division but none from the protocol tables.

Mr. Wilson: That's correct.

Mr. Feehan: I appreciate that.

Can you tell me if there's been any extra money set aside for what people refer to as the ESG, or environmental, social, and corporate governance, for First Nations in this year? Is there any attempt to support this kind of world-wide movement in terms of First Nations keeping up and moving ahead?

Mr. Wilson: You have to check with Energy on that. There's nothing in our department on that.

Mr. Feehan: With Energy? Sorry. Maybe you misheard me. I'm speaking about the environmental, social, and corporate governance. Has there been any money set aside to support governance structures and so on in the First Nations, maybe?

Mr. Wilson: No.

Mr. Feehan: No?

Mr. Wilson: Not in our department. No.

Mr. Feehan: No. Okay. So far I haven't found any new money anywhere, so perhaps somewhere along the way I can get a bit of a sense of that.

Minister, perhaps you can tell me a little bit about the Métis settlements, then. What's happening there? I understand that there is a bill introduced in the House regarding the Métis settlements, and I can't speak to the content of the bill. Can you tell me if indeed there's a bill coming forward?

Mr. Wilson: There is a bill coming forward. As you know, on the Métis settlements, that legislation had been in place for a long time, so it is time to move forward to more of a sustainable communities and governance, the kind that the Métis leaders and people expected.

My proposed amendments are basically to cut red tape and stop the things that would bind the Métis settlements and to save costs but with the Métis settlements leading the way. Along with the transfer of I think it was 1.25 million acres of land Alberta's government has contributed nearly half a billion dollars since 1990. To give you some scale, eight settlements, each between 600 and just over 1,000 residents: this is approximately 5,000 people.

What we've looked at doing was giving them more power. It's basically enabling legislation. We want to give them financial stability and help them with self-government within Alberta's laws. Basically, what I wanted us to do was help set them up for success.

Like I say, as you know, their long-term agreement is coming to an end.

Past governments have basically just kind of left them on their own, so I wanted to make sure that they're able to move into the future and be in charge of their own destiny and have that financial stability to move forward. That's why we're working very closely with them. Our staff has been working with them to make sure that they're getting prepared for this change with the long-term agreement coming to an end. That's why one of the big reasons we've started this AIOC program is to help them get involved in some of these bigger projects so that they can then be in charge of their own destiny and create a lot of income and be a lot more successful than just having government grants to . . .

Mr. Feehan: I look forward to the potential that maybe there will be some success in the future even though that has yet to happen.

Minister, can you tell me then where in the budget is reflected that you will not be renewing the LTA? Where will I see that money suddenly disappear?

Mr. Wilson: You won't see it for this budget. Their budget is the same for this year. Across my whole budget, if you look, everything is sustained. Grants are sustained. And it's two more years for the long-term agreement before you'll see anything left out.

I could have just ignored it and let it be somebody else's problem, but we've decided we want to work with them and help them and set them up for success in the future. That's why we're moving forward with some changes on their legislation.

Mr. Feehan: Okay. Thank you, Minister. So there's no money set aside for the Métis settlements with regard to the LTA now in this budget or in the future budget. Is that correct?

Mr. Wilson: No. It remains constant in this budget. Their funding is actually the same as it was. There's been no change.

Mr. Feehan: Can you tell me, given the amount of money that is presently existent in the future fund, how long that is anticipated to be able to last?

Mr. Wilson: Well, that's going to be up to them. We're enabling them, giving them the power to spend it how they want, so it could last a long time or . . .

Mr. Feehan: My understanding is that it's less than a year's worth of actual governance money available in the future fund at this particular time. Is that correct?

Mr. Wilson: I don't manage that. It's their money.

Mr. Feehan: Right. Okay. I'm just asking because I'm wondering whether or not you're planning to stay in the Métis settlements when it looks now like they're basically heading toward bankruptcy. Is that correct? Is that your assessment?

Mr. Wilson: I'd say that that's a very false statement. That was brought up in the press once, and I know some of the Métis settlements were very upset with that. Some of them are doing very well. They've got some great business opportunities going there. I was just up last week and visited a couple of Métis settlements up in the Slave Lake area. I was really impressed with what they're doing up there. You wouldn't believe it. They've got a forestry operation going there. They've got all brand new equipment. There were 23 young guys out there just working hard and so proud of what they're doing. One fellow jumped out of his truck. He'd bought his own truck for hauling logs . . .

The Chair: Sorry to interrupt, Minister. We're at the end of the hour for the Official Opposition.

So that we don't conflict with the other group, we're going to take a quick break right now. Sorry for the short notice. In five minutes please come back here, and then we'll go over to the government caucus.

[The committee adjourned from 10:16 a.m. to 10:21 a.m.]

The Chair: Welcome back. As soon as the minister is in his chair, we can begin with our questions. And there he is.

Government caucus, you wish to go back and forth? You've got a 20-minute segment.

Mr. Turton: Yes, please.

The Chair: Okay. We'll start with Mr. Turton.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much, Minister, for coming here today, along with the rest of your team, to obviously talk about this very important ministry. While my riding does not have any First Nations communities in it, we're heavily influenced by two communities that are close by, Paul band First Nation to the west as well as Enoch First Nation in between Spruce Grove and Edmonton. I just have one question at this point. I'm going to ask some of my additional questions later on. When I look on page 124 of the estimates, under the investing in Canada infrastructure line item, I guess a question I had is: I'd like to know how these projects are helping indigenous communities in our province.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you for that question. The investing in Canada infrastructure program – that's the ICIP, that you hear us talk about – provides indigenous applicants with funding to support projects that improve infrastructure in small and remote locations to help build stronger communities, to improve their social inclusion, to protect the environment, and to support Canada's transition to a clean economy. Under that infrastructure bilateral agreement Canada and Alberta must jointly announce federal ICIP funding commitments to projects.

Only two projects that have been publicly announced are within Indigenous Relations' scope. The Métis cultural centre in Fort McMurray: that's a great little project they've got going there. I was up there for the groundbreaking with members Tany Yao and Laila Goodridge, and we turned the sod up there on this great spot. They've got some big plans there to create a cultural centre, and we were happy to provide some of the funding to help them get that going.

Then we were also down in Kainai country, at what's called Red Crow Community College. This is going to be a great program as well. The chief down there, Chief Fox, is very proud of his language, and a big portion of this is going to be around the Blackfoot language. So we were happy to participate in both of those and do the sod-turnings.

The remainder of Alberta's ICIP allocation is committed to projects that will be publicly announced as the federal approval is received.

Mr. Turton: Excellent. Thank you very much for that explanation, Minister.

I guess that just a quick supplementary question before I pass it on is: based upon the criteria of First Nations communities that could potentially access funds under this program versus other programs that are under your ministry, can you just maybe elaborate a little bit on the niche that this one program fills, that, for example,

the AIOC doesn't necessarily look after, and just kind of the story about why certain communities might access this funding versus other tools at your disposal?

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. The AIOC is more for businesses. What we do there is that we try to involve the communities to get involved in some businesses that are going to create revenue for their communities whereas the ICIP is not so much about creating revenue as providing services to the community.

Like I said, with Red Crow College, that's going to provide them the opportunity to enhance their studies in their area as well as, like I said, with the language, which is a big portion of what they do there. The same with the Métis cultural centre up in Fort McMurray. These things: they're not going to be really money-makers, so they don't fit into what we call our ABIF program, the business investment fund, where the AIOC programs are actually creating revenue. That's why it's important to have these other streams going too, because not everything is going to make money, but they do enhance the community and help the young people stay in the communities.

Mr. Turton: Excellent. Thank you very much for that clarification, Minister.

At this point I'd like to turn it over to MLA Shane Getson for his questions.

Thank you.

Mr. Getson: Well, thank you, MLA Turton.

Minister, thank you again for being here today and providing a really decent budget for us to ask you a ton of questions on. How's the latency and the lag? Is it okay at your end? I know that there were some problems earlier there.

Mr. Wilson: I've usually got a latency anyways, so it works good.

Mr. Getson: And I usually talk too quick. So with the two of us, it should be interesting for the viewers at home.

I'm in one of those, you know, areas – and I'm very proud of it – that I've always referred to as God's country because we have God's lake. That's Lac Ste. Anne, and that's a historic UNESCO site, and I'm very fortunate to have the Alexander, Alexis as well as Paul First Nations.

You already noted in some of your comments that two of those First Nations have already received some assistance or whatever through the AIOC. They were the first ones, the straw dog, to go through that. Also, very interesting, too, is that Alexander is part of the Villeneuve landing network. Again, they're very progressive, very forward thinking, and my interactions with them have been excellent. So well received on that program.

But one of the items that we did struggle with as a challenge this year was literally COVID and some of the restrictions that were put in place regarding First Nations. With that, Minister, in here how do you support the mental health and addictions in the indigenous communities? Again, they had a restriction on mobility in trying to deal with that. That was a bit of an issue.

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. It's been an issue on a lot of the First Nations, of course. Our first priority around COVID-19 was ensuring public health and safety, of course. I've worked closely with other ministries there as well, with the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, to ensure that indigenous communities are aware of mental health and addiction supports provided by Alberta Health during the pandemic, and right from the beginning I've engaged with indigenous leaders and organizations about COVID-19 and the response and how Alberta's government could help.

I hear concerns, and I connect communities to supports within the province's ability to help. I literally get calls daily from chiefs across the province on issues that are coming up. We're taking a whole-of-government approach to our work with indigenous communities, including connecting with the federal government. My staff, of course, meet with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services and Indigenous Services Canada regularly to ensure indigenous leaders have accurate information on roles and responsibilities for the COVID-19 response. Of course, the vaccine rollout and the federal-provincial support are available for our First Nations and Métis people in Alberta.

We share this information with indigenous leadership every week through a newsletter. What we did: you know, to make sure that all this information gets out, we decided to start our own weekly newsletter. Every week we put out our newsletter. We put as much information in there as we can because new programs are coming out all the time, and some of them are specific to indigenous and Métis people.

So we started this newsletter. It's worked really well. We're getting good response back from the leaders that this has been quite helpful to them. The staff have been really good at getting this information out. We do phone calls if we have a big outbreak someplace. We'll get on the phone right away and get the chief online. We work with Alberta Health on this. Trish Merrithew-Mercredi over there has been awesome to work with. She actually used to work in our department, so it's a really good connection with us to have her onboard. We do these calls if there are concerns around how the vaccine is being rolled out. We've got Alberta Health right there.

We've started the quick response test kits. First Nations were the first ones to get that, especially in the more remote communities, because the more remote you are, the tougher it is to get things done. So we've been working with them to help with programs. As you know, in the First Nations where the difficulty comes in is that some people might be living as multi families in one house. COVID can spread really fast in those communities. We have to really be on top of it with the testing and make sure that we're getting the testing done, and if we do have an outbreak, we can get on it right away.

10:30

We started the programs where they can go to COVID-outreach hotels to do that isolation where they may not be able to do it in their own community, so that is available to the indigenous people. They can go to these outreach hotels. We'll actually provide transportation for them to get there. They stay there, they're looked after, they make sure that their needs are all met, and at the end of it, when they leave, they get \$625 for having to leave their community and go away to help with some of the expenses. Those programs are available, and we've been working really hard to make sure that the indigenous people are not lost in this whole COVID situation that's going on.

Mr. Getson: I appreciate it, sir. Then in regard to the budget items – maybe I missed it there – can you advise how much we've tagged or earmarked for that? It might be something with Minister Luan, too. There might be a bit of overlap, as you're suggesting, between the two. But do we kind of have a dollar value that's been allocated for mental health and addictions support?

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. At this time I believe we're funding up to \$25 million of eligible projects and services to enhance community and mental health and addiction recovery and supports. Mental Health and Addictions' COVID funding grant program was carried out in

three phases, as you know, by hon. Jason Luan, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, with Alberta Health. I'm aware that for phases 1 and 2 of the program several indigenous organizations, First Nations, and Métis settlements received grants to support the response in their communities. For phase 3, you'd have to talk directly with Minister Luan as to what he's rolling out there. They've been awesome helping us out with grants wherever they can and community services as well. The ministers have been just excellent.

Mr. Getson: I appreciate that, sir. I know the folks in Paul: we worked with them recently on it, so I can attest to that, of it going to where it needs to and helping.

With that, though, I'll cede my time, Chair, to my colleague MLA Issik from Calgary-Glenmore.

The Chair: Go ahead, Member Issik.

Ms Issik: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Minister, I'll just refer you to page 61 in the business plan. I'll tell you, I'm personally very pleased to see the commitment of this government to the success of indigenous women. I note that \$1.2 million has been allocated for indigenous women's initiatives. This is actually an increase, from what I can see, from \$1.14 million of actual spending in '19-20. I'm wondering, Minister, if you could explain what's included in these indigenous women's initiatives.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, MLA Issik, and thank you for your work on the panel with missing and murdered indigenous women. I know you've worked really hard on this, and it's an issue that – I get choked up every time we talk about it, but thank you for your work on it.

As you know, the women's initiative includes eight positions, \$115,000 of operational funding to the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, and we've got administration costs to support the Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, the First Nations women's council on economic security, and the Métis women's council on economic security, community initiatives to address violence against indigenous women and girls.

Ms Issik: Thanks so much for that, Minister, and I do appreciate being able to work on the missing and murdered indigenous women's joint working group. It's been truly an honour. I'm wondering if you could just comment a little further on some of these initiatives and specifically, you know, how these initiatives have improved the social and economic outcomes for indigenous women and girls in Alberta.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thanks again for your hard work on that. I know it's a tough one for us to deal with. As I mentioned in my opening comments, one of the roles of my ministry is to provide expert advice and guidance and specialized knowledge to other ministries. These ministries have the programs and services that directly affect indigenous women's social and economic well-being. My ministry: we co-ordinate the provisions of advice for the ministry programs, services through indigenous women's initiative division, and the First Nations and Métis women's councils on economic security.

Just for instance, the Métis women's council on economic security has identified support to indigenous women and entrepreneurs as a priority and has developed information that will assist indigenous women become entrepreneurs. This information is going to be shared with our colleagues in Jobs, Economy and Innovation to ensure that their services include information that's going to be pertinent to indigenous women.

Ms Issik: Thanks so much, Minister.

I will cede the remaining time, which I think is about a minute, to MLA Guthrie, please.

The Chair: Actually, you've got about six minutes left.

Mr. Guthrie: Six minutes?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Guthrie: Okay. Well, thank you, Minister. Just jumping right in here, on page 124 of the government estimates line 6.2 describes the role of the aboriginal consultation office. I'm just wondering if you could tell us a little bit about the work that's been happening to align that office and the Alberta Energy Regulator and just a little bit of background and roles and responsibilities of those two entities.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Pete. When it comes to the ACO office, that's one of the government's red tape reduction strategies, the aboriginal consultation office, or the ACO, and the Alberta Energy Regulator, also known as the AER. We're working collaboratively to develop a better process so that we align between the two organizations. This initiative is going to focus on creating better alignment with the ACO and the AER so that we ensure that we have increased transparency and consistency and accountability for our stakeholders.

Department-level committees have been formed. We included membership from ACO, AER, and Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. These committees will provide greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of our internal procedures and expectations for information sharing between the ACO and the AER. Many positive outcomes have been achieved to date, especially around identifying specific communication touchpoints that are going to result in better efficiencies, the development of a joint learning plan, and providing better clarity on how the organizations can work together.

Basically, regarding the AER's roles and responsibilities, it oversees the entire life cycle of upstream energy, resource development in the province, including upstream oil, natural gas, oil sands, and coal activities. In the AER process anyone who believes that they may be directly and adversely affected by an application or a project can submit a statement of concern to them.

On the other hand, the ACO is the decision-maker on the Crown's constitutional duty to consult based on treaty or harvesting rights and traditional uses. The ACO provides an adequacy of consultation decision and any advice or recommendation regarding potential mitigation or avoiding measures to AER before you can make a public interest approval or decision. About 90 per cent of the ACO's project applications are regulated by the AER.

Does that . . .

Mr. Guthrie: Yeah. Okay. Thank you. On the same subject matter but on the next page there, page 126, line item 6.2 shows that there is a slight decrease in the budget for that consultation office although the forecasted spend is very similar to the estimate. Will the partnership between the aboriginal consultation office and the Alberta Energy Regulator be impacted in any way in that budgetary change?

Mr. Wilson: Thanks for that. We touched on this a little bit before. The reduction in the budget is actually quite small, and that's going to be achieved by employing various prudent fiscal restraint measures. We're going to reduce some operating costs and reorganize and streamline some of the organization so that it

operates more efficiently and effectively to deliver our programs. Some of the examples might be the increased use of virtual meetings, moving to electronic records management and approvals, reducing the duplication of office devices and machines, and amalgamating office space in Edmonton.

10:40

These slight reductions are not going to negatively impact the work between the ACO and the AER. The ACO is mandated under a ministerial order to provide consultation adequacy and decisions with respect to natural gas development projects. The target for the ACO remains to deliver a preconsultation assessment within four Alberta government working days and to deliver a consultation adequacy assessment within 10 Alberta government working days. The ACO has consistently delivered on these timelines over the past year. We're very happy with the work they're doing there. We've given them some tight timelines to work with, but they've been able to achieve them, and it's great to see them move forward in that.

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Minister and Chair. I would like to cede my time to MLA Singh.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Singh. You have the floor.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister. Let me first acknowledge the great job that the minister and all of the minister's staff have been doing in the past year, committed to improving the lives of indigenous people in Alberta. I appreciate all the efforts of continuously working toward the path of a meaningful reconciliation.

Minister, in the 2021-2024 capital plan we see projects are receiving funding from the government for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. On page 3 the ministry has allocated \$2.1 million for infrastructure housing for Métis settlements. Can the minister explain how this funding will be allocated, and which Métis settlements will benefit from this funding?

Mr. Wilson: Thank you for the question, and thank you for the shout-out. I appreciate that. The staff has been working very hard, so thank you so much.

With the question, I'm really happy to talk about our capital plan. The line item you're referring to I think is the long-term governance and funding agreement with the Metis Settlements General Council, and we call that the LTA. The LTA was a 10-year . . .

The Chair: Sorry, Minister. I hesitate to interrupt. I hope we can get back to Mr. Singh's question when we return to the government caucus.

Right now we have a 10-minute rotation for the opposition caucus. Would you like to go back and forth to make it a full 10-minute block? Okay. Go ahead, Member Irwin.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm very proud to represent Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, where we have one of the largest urban indigenous populations, and we are home to many incredible indigenous organizations. I'm really happy to be here to ask some questions from my constituents. I want to focus particularly on indigenous women and some of the pieces around that. I know there have been some questions, but I didn't quite get the answers that I was looking for, in particular when it comes to the indigenous women's initiative. One of the first things I want to ask about – and this is on page 131 of the estimates document. Minister, you talked about eight positions. Can you talk about if that is, in fact, a reduction of FTEs? How many FTEs have been removed from this initiative?

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Chair, that cut out pretty much the whole conversation. Could you maybe re-ask that, Janis? Sorry; I couldn't hear you at all.

Member Irwin: Can we adjust time for that, please, since I'm losing time on that?

The Chair: Yeah, we'll add a minute on.

Member Irwin: Okay. Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

I wanted to get some clarity around some of the previous questions asked on the indigenous women's initiative. Minister, you can hear me now? He says that he can hear me. Perfect. I'm referring to page 131 of estimates. You mentioned previously that there are eight positions, I believe. Can you break down for us, you know, how many FTEs there are currently with the indigenous women's initiative? Is this a reduction of FTEs?

Mr. Wilson: There are eight right now. There's been no reduction there. I'm not sure. Maybe you're mistaking that with something else, but in that particular file there's been no reduction.

Member Irwin: Okay. I want to dig a little bit into the economic security council and some of the pieces around that in your business plan. Has the council submitted their recommendations over the last year?

Mr. Wilson: What section are you referring to?

Member Irwin: I'm talking about – sorry. I have this all on my computer, so I have to go back and forth to the documents. I'm talking about the business plan. I'm talking about the First Nations and Métis women's councils on economic security. That's found on page 59 of your business plan.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. Thanks, Janis. Sorry about that. As you know, the First Nations and Métis women's councils on economic security offer us valuable knowledge and insight into Alberta's government. What they do is bring an indigenous perspective to how Alberta's government can make its programs, services, and initiatives relevant to First Nations and Métis people and the Inuit. The council's wisdom and indigenous world view are welcome during our engagements on government of Alberta party initiatives such as on the Police Act, victims of crime fund reviews. We go to them and we ask them for their input on those things.

The council also informed the work of the Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Actually, what we have done is taken members from each of those councils, and they sit directly on that panel, so they have direct input there. They also bring a cultural lens to the meeting and goals of the economic security, so this is . . .

Member Irwin: So . . .

Mr. Wilson: Go ahead.

Member Irwin: Yeah. Absolutely. I know a bit about their work. I just want to know, like: have they specifically submitted recommendations over the last year, and if so, have you accepted and worked to implement those recommendations?

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. They haven't given me a formal recommendation yet. We do have staff members that work directly with them, so we are getting input, but they haven't given me a formal report yet at this point.

Member Irwin: Are there plans to – like, are there timelines around this? You know, they’ve obviously had some time, and I’m not disputing their work, but we would love to see some concrete action taken. What are the timelines? Are you expecting recommendations in the next while?

Mr. Wilson: They’re constantly giving me recommendations, but it’s informal. They don’t actually give a written report as to where we’re going. Or, actually, just give me one second here. Kristina is with me. She works directly with them.

Kristina just handed me a little file here. They have been through the secretariat of services. They’ve been preparing work for meetings, undertaking research, funding travel, and managing expenses. In March 2020 the council provided the ministry with the report on the effect of COVID-19 on them, their families, and their communities. This included dealing with perspectives on how we safely restart the economy after a partial shutdown.

They’ve also been asked to participate in priority government of Alberta engagements, so, like I said earlier, the Police Act review is a big one, protecting Albertans from convicted sex offenders, and the human trafficking task force as well. Those are some of the areas that they’re working on right at this time.

Member Irwin: I mean, that sounds like really important work. We know that COVID has had a disproportionate impact on women, particularly racialized women. You know, we don’t have enough data as far as the impacts on indigenous women, but from the fact that they’ve shared some recommendations around COVID, I think, you know, it should very much compel your ministry to act on those and to make those public. I really look forward to hearing what they found. I’d love to connect with them as well because I think this is crucial, crucial work.

I’d like to move to a topic that’s incredibly important to me and to my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford as well. Page 58 of your business plan notes that you are

leading Alberta’s response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls . . . through review and analysis of its effects on . . . policies, programs, and services.

How is this work being tracked? As I noted, your business plan mentions it once, but it’s not mentioned again. There are no metrics, as far as I can tell. So what is this review and this analysis that’s mentioned?

Mr. Wilson: Like I said, we’ve set up an independent panel that’s working on this. We’ve got four indigenous ladies that sit on it and three MLAs as well. They’ve asked for an extension on their timeline of getting their report to me, so I’m giving them that extension.

It’s been a little difficult for them, of course; they’re having to do everything through Webex and what have you to get their meetings done, as you know, but they are constantly working away at it. They’re bringing in various speakers, too. I know they’ve – I’m not sure if he’s been there yet, but he’s coming; past Grand Chief Willie Littlechild is going to be presenting to the panel. We’ve got some two-spirited people that are giving some advice to the panel as well. We know that’s very important – I know that’s a strong issue with you as well, so we’re making sure that that’s being addressed as well. They will be coming forward with a formal report, but at this time they’re still working away and getting that report ready for me.

Member Irwin: Yeah. Absolutely. I mean, I know there are some fantastic women and folks involved in that committee, so I don’t doubt that they’re, you know, taking this work seriously and doing a very comprehensive approach to it.

But, you know, I talk to families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, two-spirit folks all the time. They’ve waited. You know, they’ve waited for two years. You’ve had those calls for justice for two years. My heart breaks for those folks not seeing action, so I really hope that we will see that soon.

10:50

I don’t see a specific breakdown as to, you know, how many funds are specifically being allocated to the work around missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit folks. I know as well that status of women mentions this work but, again, with no funds associated. Can you break down for me what is being allocated specifically to that work?

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. Whatever they require for operating expenses, that’s what we give them. For their meetings, for travel or what have you, we provide them with those ongoing funds. Plus, they get the staffing as well. We pay them an honorarium as well for sitting on the committee.

Member Irwin: I mean, I’ll put on the record as well that it’s going to be so critical in implementing, you know, their recommendations that there be funds provided. I’m hoping this will mean that we’ll see an increase in the budget, in future budgets because anticipating some of, you know, what’s involved in the calls to action: those will not be successful unless there are significant investments made.

I’d like to go back to my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford for some follow-up on this.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much. Minister, I’d just like to follow up on a couple of things you said that I just want to get some clarity on. You indicated that the First Nations economic security council and the Métis economic security council have not submitted a report in the last year or two?

Mr. Wilson: What we’ve got so far is that they’ve been working on COVID. Chair, I’m getting a lot of feedback here. Sorry. Can you hear me now?

The Chair: I can hear you clearly. Go ahead.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. What’s they’ve been working on are COVID responses, and they have given a report to our staff as to what they feel should be implemented moving forward on that COVID response. That’s the reporting that they’ve given us so far on that. The other reporting they’ve done has been more of informal reporting to the staff that work with them.

Mr. Feehan: Are they responsible for submitting a report of recommendations on an annual basis now?

Mr. Wilson: No, we don’t ask them to do that on an annual basis.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. The time has elapsed for that block.

I apologize. We have a problem. We can’t have a microphone on in this room and that room at the same time because we get feedback, and it’s problematic. Please bear with us.

We will now move on to the government caucus. I believe you want to go back and forth, so it will be a 10-minute block. Who has the floor? Mr. Singh, I believe you were on the floor.

Thank you.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister. I would circle back to my question. In the 2021-2024 capital plan we see projects are receiving funding from the government for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. On page 143 the ministry has allocated \$2.1

million for infrastructure housing for Métis settlements. Can the minister explain how the funding will be allocated, and which Métis settlements will benefit from this funding?

Mr. Wilson: Thank you for the question. I think we had just gotten started on that last time, so I'll try to catch up to where we were there. I was making a few notes as we were going. The long-term agreement is an \$85 million agreement between the Alberta government and the MSGC, and 2021 marks the ninth year of that agreement. This year the Alberta government's contribution is going to be \$5 million. The \$2.1 million I believe you're talking about: that contribution is specifically for infrastructure, but that does not include funding for housing this year. There is a process for deciding which infrastructure projects are moved to the top of that list. The MSGC and the Alberta government work together to complete a capital infrastructure plan, and that is implemented each year as part of that LTA.

Without getting into too much detail, these decisions are made by teams made up of the settlement chairs and the MSGC executive members and representatives from the Alberta government as well. There are thorough reviews before the work plans are accepted and prioritized, and since the capital infrastructure plan for 2021-22 is being worked out now and needs to go through those approvals as to which settlements will benefit from the \$2.1 million investment, that will be determined later this year.

Thanks for the question.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Minister. Minister, one of your key objectives in the business plan on page 59 emphasizes your advocacy for a streamlined federal indigenous consultation process. What do you hope to accomplish through your advocacy?

Mr. Wilson: Thank you for that question as well. On that line, the government has a strong consultation policy and procedures in place as we speak. Since 2019 I've discussed our interest in supporting rigorous and effective consultation processes with my provincial counterparts, and I've advocated for the federal government to discuss how we can work together on responsible resource development projects in Alberta that trigger federal consultation.

Canada's Impact Assessment Act made federal consultation with indigenous communities much more difficult, more time consuming, and more uncertain. This impacts indigenous communities, resource development, and project approvals. We've heard from industry proponents, investors, and indigenous leaders alike that the federal Impact Assessment Act creates significant uncertainty, and as a result of that, there are longer timelines, complicated processes, unclear decision-making, and unclear lines of accountability, and all of this impacts confidence in investments in Alberta. We continue to advocate for a better federal indigenous consultation process, one that's going to provide clear timelines and legal certainty for indigenous communities and project components consistent with the federal government's constitutional obligations.

Thank you for that question.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Minister, for answering.

Now I will turn it over to my colleague MLA Yaseen.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for your work and the work of your staff to develop this project. My question is around collaboration. How do you collaborate with others to develop policies? Specifically, I'll go to page 60, key objective 2.2 in your business plan, which indicates that your ministry will be collaborating with other ministries in the development of policies,

programs, and initiatives. How does the government of Alberta use indigenous knowledge to develop or review policies?

Mr. Wilson: Thank you for that question. Our government values that indigenous knowledge, and we incorporate it in many areas such as up north. We have the caribou range planning, we have regional land-use planning, and we do environmental assessment and monitoring, co-operative management of parks and bison herds. The ministry utilizes that draft indigenous knowledge guiding document to provide advice to other ministries. This document includes best practices and culturally appropriate ways to use, to store, present, and consider indigenous knowledge in government decision-making. The document is in draft format at this time, and further work is expected in '21-22 to finalize the document and to begin implementation activities. Implementation activities include the development of internal guidance tools to ensure a consistent approach of considering and applying indigenous knowledge across all of the government departments.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Minister.

I will now pass it on to MLA Loewen.

Mr. Loewen: Okay. Thank you very much. Minister, I appreciate your time here today. I just want to talk a little bit about the Métis people and the Métis settlements, and though I don't have any right in my constituency, I'm very close to East Prairie, Peavine, and Gift Lake settlements. Paddle Prairie settlement is quite a bit to the north – I think it's one of the biggest, probably is the biggest one in Alberta – but I did spend a lot of time working in the Keg River area.

I just wanted to talk about the relationship the Alberta government has with the Métis people, that unique relationship. On page 124 of the government estimates, line 2, it summarizes the role of First Nations and Métis relations. How is the government of Alberta working to encourage that relationship and the success of the Métis communities?

Mr. Wilson: Thank you for that question. I know you have a very deep connection with the indigenous people up in your area. When we were up there and we visited the First Nation, I could see that you're very close, and it was good to see that you're working so closely with the indigenous people up there.

11:00

My staff and I keep in regular contact with the Métis Nation of Alberta and with the Metis Settlements General Council and also with the individual settlements. When a settlement needs our help with something, they let us know, and we help to path find the answer, the right person to talk to. For Indigenous Relations: we work with the Métis Nation of Alberta through a 10-year framework agreement, and we do provide them with annual funding as well. In addition to that, Indigenous Relations works with Metis Settlements General Council and the Métis settlements to implement what we've talked about before, the 10-year long-term governance and funding arrangements agreement. We also provide annual funding through that agreement to advance the sustainability of the settlements through contributions to settlement infrastructure to support safe and healthy communities and initiatives to improve educational outcomes.

My staff are also involved in trilateral discussions between the Metis Settlements General Council and the government of Canada, focused on the long-term financial sustainability of the Métis settlements.

The Métis Nation of Alberta and the Métis settlements are also eligible to apply to the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities

Corporation that we've talked about quite a bit. The AIOC's mandate is probably the most meaningful and innovative economic reconciliation initiative to be established in Canada. It has the potential to be provincially, nationally, and globally significant for an inclusive economic ecosystem for meaningful, prosperous indigenous and industry partnerships and regional financial successes. The AIOC's potential is profound through engagement to drive successful investments for indigenous communities, which in turn is going to drive regional economic recovery and future strength for the province.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Minister. Under key objective 1.5 in the business plan on page 59 it indicates supporting "community, social and economic development." For the Métis people, Minister, can you explain the importance of the government of Alberta's relationship with the Métis communities?

Mr. Wilson: Thanks for that question as well. As you probably know, our province is home to over 114,000 Métis people, the largest population in western Canada and the second-largest in the country. We're also home to the only land base for Métis people in the country. Alberta provided 1.25 million acres of land. We're also extremely proud of this, and this relationship is important. We respect the contributions that the Métis people have made and continue to make to our province.

In Budget 2021 we're investing \$5 million into the aboriginal business investment fund, the ABIF. The ABIF provides capital funding to indigenous community-owned businesses for development opportunities, and that program offers direct investment into eligible indigenous community-owned business projects to improve social and economic outcomes in indigenous communities while boosting regional economies. The Métis organizations are eligible to apply for ABIF, and they were successful last year.

The Chair: Sorry to interrupt, Minister. Our 10-minute block is up for that. We can continue on with that when we get back to government caucus.

Mr. Loewen: Thanks, Minister.

The Chair: We'll now turn over to five minutes for the Official Opposition. Would you like to go back and forth?

Mr. Feehan: Ten minutes together, I guess.

The Chair: Ten minutes together. Thank you very much. Mr. Feehan, go ahead.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Minister. I'd just like to get back to the conversations about the First Nations and Métis women's economic councils because I'm a bit confused. In the past, as you know, when I was in your position, we received regular reports with recommendations for implementation, and you're indicating now that that is no longer part of the process. You no longer get recommendations from these committees?

Ms Johnston: They provide advice.

Mr. Wilson: She's my right hand on economic security councils. She says we don't require them annually. They do occasionally give us written reports, but it's more on an informal basis.

Mr. Feehan: Okay, so there's no particular recommendations that are . . .

Mr. Wilson: No. The councils themselves determine when they will actually provide their reports. We don't pressure them to do that.

Mr. Feehan: That sounds like a downgrade in their status. Can you tell me a little bit about . . .

Mr. Wilson: Same as when you were there. It's the same thing, so it's not a downgrade at all.

Mr. Feehan: Apparently not. You indicated that they had made a report or a comment about COVID, and I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit about what resources and staffing have been put into responding to the requests for assistance around COVID from these committees.

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. A lot of it is around the vaccine rollout. As you know, some indigenous people are not that comfortable in going to some of the rollout positions, so one of the recommendations is to maybe look at using the friendship centres as a point where we can provide vaccines. We've been working really closely with Alberta Health. As I said before, Trish Merrithew-Mercredi – you probably know her; she used to work in the department and is now ADM with Alberta Health – understands very well some of the issues around that, so I've asked her if we could look at using some of the friendship centres for rolling out the vaccine. That's one of things that they're looking at right now. That's from direct advice from our security councils, because they have that lens a lot better than what you or I would have to be able to make those types of decisions.

Mr. Feehan: Is there any commitment that there will in fact be a rollout of vaccines at the friendship centres or any other place like the MNA office or anywhere like that that would be more appropriate for the indigenous community?

Mr. Wilson: I never thought about the MNA office, but that's something that I could bring forward and take a look at.

The other thing we also did that they brought forward was the isolation supports, and that was brought forward and implemented as well. They've been working very closely with us on these issues, and I really value their input on these things.

Mr. Feehan: But today nothing has actually happened; it's just part of the conversation moving forward. Okay. Thank you very much.

I wonder if I can just move on a little bit. I know that you like to talk about economic development, and I was very concerned to see that some of the economic development plans or programs that have previously existed in the department are no longer in the budget. I wonder if you could specifically start by speaking to ABIF, or the aboriginal business investment fund. Can you tell me a little bit about the fate of that? It appears that the contributions to that fund have been reduced to zero in this budget. Is that correct?

Mr. Wilson: No. You're actually a hundred per cent wrong. The funding is fully intact, and we find that is one of our very, very valuable tools to work with the First Nations and Métis people. It's a great program. It helps out with some of the smaller projects that provide a lot of employment and value to their communities. In the last year we've gone and helped out the Piikani down there. They've got a little service station at the side of the road. I think that they're employing, when I was down there, something like 20 people. We got a bannock dog down there, and it was delicious. It was really fun to visit some of these places and see how they're benefiting the community. We've been working with them through

Transportation as well to help provide better access to their facility there.

In Stoney Nakoda there they've got the restaurant on the side of the road. I think it was one of the first – I'm not sure if it was a Smitty's, but it's one of the chains. Was it Smitty's? Yeah. They've become partners with them on that. There are always things rolling out. This year we're rolling out some – I'm getting some feedback again, Chair. Yeah. We've been rolling out the program. Last year there were 10 successful projects rolled out. We've set the cap at \$500,000. That way we can provide more than just a few, a handful. We're working at rolling it out again this year. It's in the budget. It's a hundred per cent in there, \$5 million.

We also helped out the Métis Crossing this year. I actually was able to re-up their – it's a very large project. They're building a hotel out at the Métis Crossing there. It's a great project. They already had their cultural centre there, and they had a little campground. Now they've got the hotel that they're building. It's actually been framed up, and they're starting to work on the inside now. For this season going forward, they're hoping that they can get opened up and start with that. They've got a whole program around creating a tourism operation there.

That's one of the things that I really want to work on this year, tourism, working with the indigenous people, because I believe there's a huge opportunity to get involved with indigenous tourism across Alberta, to be able to work with – down south we've got the Blackfoot Crossing, which you're familiar with. We've got Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump. We come up to the Métis Crossing, where they're developing their cultural centre and hotel. Up in Fort McMurray we've got the Métis cultural centre there. A lot of the settlements: some of the lakes out there are absolutely beautiful, pristine. I was up at Fishing Lake with Chairman Herb looking at the spot along the lake: absolutely pristine.

There are a lot of opportunities with Kikino, their campground and their rodeo grounds there. We've helped them out with a grant to expand on that. I think there's a huge opportunity to help.

11:10

Mr. Feehan: I appreciate that. I'm just wondering if you can tell me where I'd find in the budget the allocation for the ABIF program.

Mr. Wilson: I guess it's not specific. It's lumped in with FNMR. You'll see the \$5 million in there.

Mr. Feehan: Five million dollars within FNMR. Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

I wonder if I could speak to you a little bit about some of the urban initiative programs that happened. Of course, last year we saw a dramatic cut to many of the programs. I noticed earlier you mentioned groups like Metis Calgary Family Services still receiving some money and, of course, the aboriginal friendship centre receiving money, but both of them and the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women all received dramatic cuts last year. Can you tell me: is there any change between last year and this year in the amount of monies those organizations have received?

Mr. Wilson: We've kept the budget solid on those items. I think I spoke to it earlier, but the Red Deer Urban Aboriginal Voices Society is getting \$50,000; the Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth in Calgary, \$50,000; the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society in Edmonton, \$100,000. I really like the Bent Arrow project. They're doing some great work there, and I like visiting them and seeing some of their projects as they're moving forward.

Mr. Feehan: You mean the budget from last year, but they haven't recovered any of the losses that they got the year before. Is that correct?

Mr. Wilson: It's no loss to grants, this budget. We're staying solid. We haven't decreased it at all. The only decrease is in some operational stuff where we've been able to enhance some of our office supplies and things like that. That's the only decrease you're going to see. As far as grants are concerned, they're staying the same as before.

Mr. Feehan: So the losses of the past are just continued.

I was wondering if you could tell me about some of the other programs that have been going on across ministries that your department has been involved in. For example, there has been a program for the training of all of the public service, of all 27,000 I guess was the original number that was mentioned, to receive training on indigenous histories, traditions, and knowledges. Last year you indicated that you would be continuing the money that had been previously allocated but not continuing to phase 2 of that particular project. Can you tell me, first of all: have you continued the training for the public service? Is there any decision regarding phase 2, or has that continued to remain to be unfunded?

Mr. Wilson: We're continuing on. I don't know if you want to call it phase 2, but the project is continuing on. It's maybe slowed down a little bit due to COVID, but we are still continuing on with the program.

Mr. Feehan: Okay. Thank you. Can you tell me a little bit about the Treaty 8 trappers MOU? I understand that the Treaty 8 trappers MOU would have been signed in April 2018, providing funding to the Trappers Association to continue the traditional practices of...

The Chair: Sorry to interrupt, Member.

We'll move on to the government caucus for a five-and-five rotation, I assume? Go ahead, Mr. Turton.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you again, Minister, for your insightful answers. I guess my questions that I have today are going to go a little bit off of my line of questions that I had previously as well as some of the comments by MLA Feehan, what he was asking about. That really has to deal with the aboriginal business investment fund, or ABIF. I realize, Minister, that there is \$5 million currently allocated for economic development projects. Now, I realize that in my previous question, you were distinguishing the differences between, you know, investing in Canada infrastructure, which necessarily isn't about getting a high rate of return but has to really deal with the social sustainability of many First Nations communities around the province.

I'm fascinated with some of the answers to Member Feehan that you were talking about, about some of the projects that are involved in this individual program. I guess a couple of questions regarding this: can you just maybe roll off, perhaps, some of the projects that are currently accessing this fund, and then maybe also just say again why this fund itself is a little different from other funds that are currently under your portfolio, specifically the AIOC?

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. The ABIF funding is a grant. They don't have to repay that. It is a \$5 million fund.

This year we've got some great projects rolling out. One of them that I'll speak to is down south in Kainai country. They've got a forage operation. This is something that you have to see. This is, like, a world-renowned operation. They grow timothy. Like I said,

the chief down there says that he has water and wind, so he changes his water into grass. He's basically selling water. They harvest timothy. When you drive down there, you'll see miles of timothy. They harvest it and bring it into their factory, where they compress it. They'll take a big bale and compress it down into a very compact model to sell. They'll send that off across the world, all around the world. We're blessed to have the water that we do here. Other countries don't have the land or the water to grow this forage. For example, in Japan they'll use his product for the milk cows and bring it over and feed it there. They've also now got a contract with Saudi Arabia.

We were able to give them a grant to expand their operation down there. It employs a lot of people. It creates millions of dollars of income for them. It's something to be seen. The chief is so proud of his operation down there. He actually called myself and the Premier up the other day just to thank us for helping them move forward with that. It was really exciting to see that. Those are the kinds of things that really make it worth while, moving on with these.

Like I say, the tourism operation and this whole tourism idea that I've come up with is to work with, for example, Kikino this year. They'll be expanding their campground operation there. We helped them with that. We were up there at their rodeo, not this past summer but the previous one. We saw what they were doing up there. There's another great place to visit. They've got a great lake there. They've got some cabins down by the lake, and they've got their rodeo operation going. There's a lot of really interesting stuff that's going on, even for stores.

If you go up to Fort Chip – they've got a little store up there now – the home of \$15-a-litre milk up until this little store came along, for the folks up there, I mean, to get fresh fruit or milk or vegetables for the kids was really tough, but now they've got their own little store there, where they can help out the community. It's really rewarding to see some of these programs roll out and see how we've been able to help the communities up there.

Mr. Turton: Minister, I have to say that I realize you're not in the same room as us right now, that you're in the room next door, but the grin and smile on your face as you talked about these programs was almost poking into this room. It's obvious that your enthusiasm for these types of programs about empowering local communities to have these types of success stories that we can brag about – you know, it's going to reap benefits for decades and generations to come.

Obviously, I appreciate your leadership in making sure that this fund remains in place. I guess I was hoping as well that you can maybe elaborate a little bit about the process around how different aboriginal and First Nations communities around the province can access this fund. I think the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well right across the entire province. Obviously, there's always, you know, a desire for more funds or access to more funds, but maybe just elaborate a little bit about how communities can access this fund and if there are any limitations to the scope of what they can use those funds for so that we can get that message out, potentially, to prospective groups around the province.

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. That's a great question. We have a panel that's set up to review this. We try not to make it a political decision, so we keep it arm's length from our department, and the panel reviews all the various applications that come in.

For instance, this year Lac Ste. Anne Métis are getting a greenhouse up there. So it's kind of looked at, and food security has become a huge issue. Especially, it's really showing through COVID that food security is a big issue across the province. With a lot of the First Nations and Métis people, they're really starting to

focus on this whole food security, so when we see some applications come in to develop a greenhouse, which is not only going to create employment but create the food security for that community, those are the types of things which will prioritize them and move them up on the list. Like I say, the campgrounds, the Kikino resort: basically, the panel prioritizes them; they look at them. They have a matrix they can fit them into and then scale it out to see where the application can get the most bang for the buck.

11:20

We're actually looking at this year maybe making a little change so that we can spread it out a little farther. Some groups, like I say, are very sophisticated, and they're able to put in a really good application and check off all the boxes. We want to make sure that everybody is able to participate in that, so we're going to try to spread it around as best we can to help as many Métis and indigenous people as we can out there.

Mr. Turton: I'm very thankful, Minister, that you made that acknowledgement. I know that just outside of my riding I have the Paul band, like I said, to the west, the Enoch to the east. I mean, you have two examples of First Nations communities that have very different degrees of access to financial capital. The ability that you talked about for different First Nations communities around the province to be able to access a program like this regardless of their fiscal means I think is important. We have to make sure that everyone has access to these much-needed funds so that they can better their respective communities.

I guess the last question I have on this point is, you know, regarding caps and the limitations on the program applications themselves. Is there a limit to what individual communities can access at a given time for a project? Obviously, we realize that there are some economic opportunities that could be so large that they can in essence eat up the entire \$5 million you have here. Are there limitations per se so that we could spread those funds around to a greater number of communities around the province? Obviously, if we don't, then it'll be concentrated amongst a smaller group of applicants.

Mr. Wilson: Now, that's a really good point, and that's why we've adjusted the program a little bit. I've put it at a \$500,000 cap. You pretty much have to get into that range so that you can get a viable operation going. With the \$5 million, that means that we can take on 10 projects. So the cap is \$500,000. They could apply for \$100,000 or up to \$500,000, but that would be our cap. If it's a project beyond that, then it allows them to save up and put some of their own revenues towards some of the bigger projects and use this as the seed money to get it started.

For this year the cap is at \$500,000, and what we'll do is that the department will send out a notice to all the First Nations and the MNA and the Métis settlements to let them know that the program is going to be operational again and that they can start putting their applications forward. Then, as the year goes forward, the staff in the department and the panel will start reviewing them and prioritizing as to which ones we can move forward and fund.

Mr. Turton: Thank you for that clarification.

One minute? Perfect.

My last question. I'll probably have to continue it into the next segment, but I know, Minister, obviously, that you are very passionate and concerned about ensuring a safer future for indigenous women and girls around the province. I would also just like to applaud Minister Aheer as well. This has been a burning issue for her as well as for MLA Issik down in Calgary-Glenmore,

who are very passionate, I know from conversations with them, about making these initiatives move forward.

I guess my question is regarding page 126, under line 3, indigenous women's initiatives. I know that you have expended resources to be able to push this and to make sure that, you know, indigenous women and girls remain safe here in our province. My question is: what have you or your ministry been able to accomplish so far in terms of quantifiable ways that the bar is being moved forward to ensure that those most vulnerable Albertans here in our province are actually looked after?

The Chair: Sorry, Member, to interrupt. We'll have to wait for that answer in the next round.

We'll move over to a five-and-five block for a full 10 minutes with the Official Opposition. Go ahead, Mr. Feehan.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Minister, I know I was asking about – well, let's finish the Treaty 8, and then we'll go back. I just was asking about the Treaty 8 trappers MOU, that was signed in April 2018. There doesn't seem to be any indication that that MOU is being continued at this particular time. Can you tell me if there are any funds being put into that agreement with the Trappers Association or whether or not you've decided to defund them?

Mr. Wilson: Actually, we've never funded that. That actually comes under Environment and Parks, as you probably know, and they are moving forward with the funding for that. I know it's an important issue for that, so if you get a chance, check in with Environment and Parks, and I'm sure they'd be happy to let you know what they're doing on that file.

Mr. Feehan: I certainly will, because I received a complaint from the Treaty 8 chiefs about the lack of continuing funding. But I gather I should go to Environment and Parks for that. Thank you.

I want to go back to the aboriginal business investment fund. You, of course, have spent much time talking about how wonderful it is and describing individual projects, the \$5 million. I was in error. It is not this year that it is discontinued. On page 141 of the capital plan it indicates that the aboriginal business investment fund goes from the \$5 million this year to zero next year and zero the year after. So the three-year plan is only the monies this year. Given that you've just literally spent 10 minutes celebrating this fund, can you explain why you're extinguishing it after this point?

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. Basically, like I said, for this year, it's intact. We're talking about this year's budget, so that's all I can really speak to. But in future years – I find it one of our valuable tools, so I would definitely be working hard to make sure that it continues on in our budget. I can't speak to future budgets, of course. It looks like Alberta is going to be doing very well.

Mr. Feehan: It's part of the budget that's submitted to us here on page 141. It has a three-year capital plan.

Mr. Wilson: You're talking about future years, and what I'm talking about is what's actually happening on the ground this year. This year it is happening, and in future years we'll certainly work hard to make sure that it remains in the budget, but we can't guarantee what happens in future budgets.

Mr. Feehan: It seems that we're waiting for a lot of successes to potentially happen in the future in this ministry, Minister, and it's been a little discouraging.

Perhaps I will go on to ask a little bit about the indigenous housing capital program. Now, originally there was \$100 million

that was put into that program – and it was worked on by this department – and that has been reduced. Now I see that the capital plan has it at \$10 million. Can you explain what has happened that would reduce the indigenous housing capital program from \$110 million to \$10 million?

Mr. Wilson: That, as you know, has never been in our budget. That's Seniors and Housing, but we work closely with them, and we've been quite successful. Just last year we did some housing projects for the Métis here in Edmonton. I know we were down there. If you follow my Twitter, you'll have seen me doing a Métis jig on the floor of the new construction that was going on. We've been successful also with Seniors and Housing on the Elizabeth Métis settlement. I believe we did, if I'm not mistaken, 24 houses there.

Mr. Feehan: I don't deny, Minister, that in fact \$10 million is there. My question is that you've been working on it, and you have staff assigned to work with the other ministries, as we identified earlier. You made a commitment – and I actually read it out to you – that you, in fact, work with the implementation of policies and other programs. You put staff time to it. What you're telling me, then, is that your staff is unable to work with the other ministry to maintain \$100 million in housing for indigenous people over the last two years. Is that correct?

Mr. Wilson: No. That's incorrect. Actually, I've been very clear that that's not our budget; that's other budgets, Seniors and Housing. I would suggest that you ask them about where their budget is at. But I know we've been very successful with the projects that we have worked on. As I've told you, we've had a couple of really good, successful projects.

Mr. Feehan: I understand that you'll take credit and be very happy with the projects you have been successful with, but you won't acknowledge the fact that your department has been unable to get the other department to maintain \$100 million in the housing project, and you've asked me to ask them instead. You can't have it both ways, Minister.

Mr. Wilson: As you know, Mr. Chair, as the first thing, you don't control other ministers' budgets . . .

Mr. Guthrie: Point of order.

Mr. Wilson: . . . and I work as closely . . .

The Chair: A point of order has been noted.

Mr. Guthrie: Yeah. Standing Order 23(i), imputing unavowed motives to another member. It's happened numerous times here. I mean, there are plenty of questions to be asked. The injections of opinion and conjecture about the minister are unfair, and I think that we should apologize here and move on to the questions.

The Chair: A response?

Member Irwin: Yeah. Respectfully, it's not a point of order; it's a matter of debate. He's asking fair questions about lines in the budget, and I would like for the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to be able to proceed.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm ready to rule on that. I have noted on numerous occasions and not just in this meeting that members tend to push forward, you know, insinuate that the minister is not interested in dealing with

the question or answering the question. I think the minister has made it quite clear that, yes, he is proud of the projects he's worked on, but he's not responsible for that portion of that budget. Although this is a matter of debate, I don't see it as a point of order. I do see it as a matter of debate. I would ask the members to have some respect for the good work the minister has done and keep the questions to a civil tone. Thank you.

11:30

Mr. Feehan: Thank you to the chair for direction on that. It's always a bit frustrating when things that are being done for the indigenous people – because of a crossministerial mandate by this ministry, they don't have to be responsible for responding. But I will try to keep my questions in line.

Perhaps we can move on a little bit to ask about the clean drinking water projects that have been established through this ministry in co-operation with other ministries. I wonder if you can at least tell me: how many projects have been completed under this program? How many are in the construction phase? How many are in the design phase? How many are in the feasibility study phase?

Mr. Wilson: Thank you. This has been an important issue to me as well. We were able to reaffirm that the \$100 million commitment to provide reliable access to clean drinking water to First Nations through the First Nations regional drinking water tie-in project is going forward. We have collaborated with First Nations, municipalities, four water commissions, and our provincial and federal government partners and made progress on the overall project goal.

Two of the projects are complete to the First Nation reserve boundary. Eight other projects are in the construction, detail, design, or feasibility study phase. In June 2020 Alberta Transportation announced an additional \$13 million for the Ermineskin waterline project as part of the water infrastructure grants. Indigenous Relations is working diligently with all parties to assist with the formal agreement between the North Red Deer River Water Services Commission and Alberta Transportation for the Ermineskin waterline project. Transportation holds the funding and is responsible for the project management, as you know, while Indigenous Relations is responsible for the relationship management.

The Minister of Transportation can better answer any questions about the timelines on this, but I have been working very close with the Ermineskin group. They are in the Maskwacis area, which is part of my area. We've had several meetings to move the project forward, and I'm happy to say that it is moving forward. A great group of people out there. I've got to give a shout-out to the lady that's head of it with Ermineskin. She's relentless. Like, she honestly is relentless, and she's going to make sure this project happens, so it's kind of an exciting one to see move forward. They do have a lot of issues with drinking water. They have to truck it in now, so they're trucking it quite a ways. It has to be trucked in from Wetaskiwin and then into cisterns. It is an issue, and we recognize that. Thankfully, Transportation is working with us to move this project forward.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Minister. I certainly support the program. It was initiated under my tenure. I would be happy to hear of future successes. I'm glad to know that we are moving ahead although I'm concerned that the two completed projects were in fact completed under the last government, so there don't seem to be any new completions along the way. I guess I'm also wondering about whether or not there is . . .

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt again. These 10 minutes can go by very fast.

We'll move on to the government caucus and continue with Mr. Turton.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just again I'll commend the minister for your ability to hop from question to question, block to block. You must be an amazing ping-pong player for the amount of time you can swivel back and forth and react accordingly, but I want you to know it's very much appreciated.

Just to kind of continue on my question that I was asking in the last block, again, just to remind you, it talks about a safer future for indigenous women and girls here in our province. Specifically, I know, looking at the government estimates on page 126, line 3, that it talks about indigenous women's initiatives from your ministry. I know you have expended those resources, you know, time and effort and, obviously, funds, so I guess I was looking for some ways that you can describe to this committee and to Albertans how you have actually been able to accomplish this feat so far, how you have been able to move the bar forward to show quantifiable programs that can be identified and benchmarks that have been reached about how women and girls can be safer here in our province.

Mr. Wilson: Thanks for that. As you know, we started off by – I actually accepted the report on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. That kind of started the whole process moving forward, and then we went and met with the Awo Taan society down in Calgary and saw how important it was to them. We've been working really hard on this. Like I say, we've got some great MLAs involved in that: Whitney Issik, and now we've got Laila Goodridge on there, and Martin Long, who's never going to forgive me, is on the panel as well. He's the only guy on there, but he's holding his own. We've got a great panel that's working on this.

The women's initiatives division: they've been leading the way on this in supporting the Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and that's to examine the national inquiry for the final report. The joint working group has identified 10 priorities at this point and is now in the process of examining each one in depth and manner. My ministry is ensuring that the joint working group has the resources and hears from the right partners.

The ministry is also providing that specialized knowledge I referred to earlier in other ministries as they address safety issues for all Albertans. We continue to work with the Ministry of Community and Social Services in the implementation of disclosure to protect against domestic violence. That's what we put into law, Clare's law. We also support the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General in development of the nine-point plan to combat human trafficking, including supporting the Human Trafficking Task Force. My ministry also works with the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women to identify issues related to safety and to facilitate discussions with the appropriate ministers on that.

Mr. Turton: Thank you very much for, obviously, the comprehensive answer, Minister. As well, I feel bad about not mentioning the efforts of MLA Long and MLA Goodridge in this initiative as well.

I guess my quick supplemental is that I know we're really here talking about the business plan for today and this budget cycle, but obviously there's a long-term forecast for funds towards this important initiative. I guess I was just hoping if you can just elaborate a little bit on future plans, the direction your ministry is going in this regard. I know this is an ongoing concern, ongoing

work, but I guess I was looking for a little bit more of a long-term approach, if there was anything else that you can add to that.

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. What we're looking at is getting these 10 points nailed down, and then the panel is going to actually give me a full-blown report on ways to move forward on this. We're looking at probably not until next fall before they get it completed. I was hoping to have it for – this spring would be the anniversary of when the report was put forward, but they said that they really want to make sure that they've got a comprehensive report before they bring it forward. They're working hard on that, and I know they meet sometimes for full days at a time to complete this important work.

I know there are a lot of people out there that are anxious to move forward on that, but some of the things are already moving forward. If you've ever read through the report on missing and murdered indigenous women, there are literally two books this thick with stories of people that have lost loved ones and then the actions to move forward. There are actions to move forward that all Canadians can work on. We've started implementing a lot of those already, so you can go into that report and see the actions that all Canadians can do to help make the lives of indigenous women safer. Those things are ongoing as we go.

But the big report that we're waiting for is from this panel, and they've been doing a great job there, and my heart just goes out to them. It's a tough one to deal with.

Mr. Turton: Well, thank you again very much for that answer.

At this point I'd like to defer the rest of my time to my good friend MLA Shane Getson.

Mr. Getson: Well, thank you, MLA Turton. The only thing I like better than being able to talk about my constituency is when somebody else does it for me, so thank you for all the plugs of the folks in my area.

Thank you, Minister, for all the work that you're doing, again. I'll try to keep my comments and questions brief to ensure that my colleagues get a chance here as well. In outcome 3 of the business plan on page 60 it states that relationships with indigenous leadership and organizations are maintained and strengthened. Can you speak to Alberta's work on the urban indigenous people? Again, I think you started to touch on that a little bit with the housing initiatives. Again, the folks out in Paul and Alexis also have some interest in that area with some properties they own in the city.

11:40

Mr. Wilson: Thanks for that question, Shane. You definitely are from God's country. It's beautiful up there. I appreciate the backgrounds you put on your screen when we're having our discussions.

The department actively supports indigenous organizations and communities to identify funding available from other departments, as we talked about before. This will not change. We work hard on that. We also support indigenous communities and organizations through various means, including, if requested, providing information on different funding sources available to the urban indigenous organizations from various levels of government and ministries within. Indigenous Relations works with government of Alberta and government of Canada departments. It provides information to indigenous organizations and communities about calls for proposals and other funding opportunities.

During this pandemic I've strengthened my relationship with the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association. It's a recipient of my weekly newsletter as well on COVID-19 supports and other information, and I have included them as part of the calls that I

make to community leadership to check in to see how communities are dealing in these difficult times. Like I said, we've worked closely with addictions and mental health on getting supports to communities to help them get grants for various things that are going on.

It's been difficult times, but thankfully, with the vaccines coming out, we're starting to see a light at the end of the tunnel, and we're happy that we've been able to help as much as we can.

Mr. Getson: I appreciate it, sir. You know, it's being felt, for sure.

The next one. Just skipping gears here a bit, I'd like to go back to the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corp if we can. I know we talked about some of the successes on it, and not without being political, I think that some of that was diminished a bit by the members opposite, taking away a lot of the strides that you had. It isn't just, you know, minimal participation; there are some really good things. If you could talk about that. I think it's government estimates, page 126, line 12. Could you talk about – page 28, 2020 fiscal plan, mentions the first loan guarantees, the six First Nations. Again, can you give me a little more colour around the Cascade project and, really, the fulsome participation that's taking place out there?

Mr. Wilson: Well, thanks for that. It's been such an exciting project to be involved with. When the Premier came forward with this idea to create this Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, I thought, "Wow; what an opportunity this is going to be across the province." It's game changing. This is literally game changing, life changing for these communities to be involved in these bigger communities' projects. Like I said, it's been difficult, other than for some of the ones that are positioned close to the cities or whatever, to get involved with bigger projects just because of the fact that the access to capital has been so hard. Like I said, you can't take a First Nation and put it up as collateral to a bank. We've been able to change that game and give them the opportunity to get that backstopping in these projects.

The Cascade project out there has been just a great example that we can use for other First Nations to move forward on. What we did is that we involved six First Nations, as you know, to get involved in this. A couple of them were very advanced and able to take on the bigger projects where some weren't, so they were gracious enough to bring along some other First Nations to help them be partners in prosperity with Alberta and to see this project get off the ground and the excitement out there in the communities. Like, I know there was some trepidation that possibly this isn't real, that nobody is going to get any funding, so when we get this first project off the ground, all of a sudden everybody wants to be in on this. So we've got projects coming in left, right, and centre, and it's a big job just to get them all to see where . . .

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, Minister.

We will now move back over to the Official Opposition for five and five, I believe, for a 10-minute block if that's acceptable, Mr. Feehan.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate the opportunity to ask my last round of questions here. I just want to clarify on the last couple of things. From your point of view, your budget, you know of no additional monies being put into the indigenous housing capital program, I assume. You know of no new money being put into the water tie-in program either, that's put here. There's no recovery of the urban indigenous initiative monies that were lost last year. I just want to be sure. You can correct me if I'm wrong on any of those.

You can also tell me if there is anywhere in this budget I should understand that there is money put in for the implementation of any projects suggested by the Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. You have indicated, of course, you're paying their honorariums and their travel expenses and so on; operational expenses, I think, is how you framed it. But there's actually no money for implementation of any ideas in this current budget. Am I right on all of that, Minister?

Mr. Wilson: Actually, no. On the water projects, we were able to secure an additional \$13 million from Transportation for the Ermineskin project. That project is now earmarked, I believe, for \$39 million, just off the top of my head. That allowed it to go forward. Without that additional \$13 million, it wouldn't have been able to go forward, just of the costs. It's a long ways. We have to run a line all the way from Ponoka up to the Ermineskin and then develop a . . .

Mr. Feehan: Very happy to hear that, Minister. Sorry. I'm just saying that I'm happy to hear that, Minister. I didn't understand that the \$13 million was extra on top of the hundred million that had originally been set up. I thought it was just a definition of how much was put in. Thank you. I'd love to put one in your success column.

You also mentioned earlier that there are changes. I believe it was to the AWN, your relationship with Aseniwuche Winewak Nation. Did I understand that right in your initial speech, that you have made some kind of financial changes to the AWN?

Mr. Wilson: Yes. There's been a \$50,000 decrease on that budget. It's the only one that actually did get a decrease. What we're looking at is working with them on grants. They have a lot of issues out there. Of course, MLA Martin Long is from that area, so he spends a lot of time working with the good folks out there. He's brought up to my attention some of the shortfalls. We're going to continue to work with the AWN and with Martin to make sure that we can help them with some of the projects going forward.

Mr. Feehan: Can you explain why there was a decrease of \$50,000, I believe you said?

Mr. Wilson: Well, it was one area where we saw that we could make a decrease without causing too much harm. What we really want to do is work with them on some of the bigger projects. So the \$50,000 seems like a lot of money, but if you can develop another project to help with a road or something like that, it's substantially more than that. That's what we'll be doing, working with them going into the future.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you.

Minister, can you identify whether or not your department is involved in any of the antiracism initiatives that have been going on or that were previously going on in the government? Are they involved in the committee? Are they providing any extra knowledge around things such as, you know, the implementation of indigenous history, tradition, and knowledge to the antiracism committee of the larger government? Is there involvement from your department at all?

Mr. Wilson: We provide some support, but I'm not directly involved with that. I know they're doing a lot of important work there going forward. It's something that we work on on a daily basis. To be blunt with you, there are issues out there all the time. You know, we do what we can at our level. The bigger committee: we provide support to them, but we're not directly involved with it.

Mr. Feehan: Okay. Are there any antiracism initiatives within your department that you're actually paying for?

Mr. Wilson: Pretty much everything we touch on is antiracism. We work daily at it to make sure that people are treated fairly, especially around right now. We're seeing that the need for housing for people experiencing homelessness has gone up dramatically, and the addiction out there is brutal. We've been working closely. The province has actually, through Minister Luan, developed a great program around addictions and mental health and working with indigenous people. We'll be putting over 4,000 beds across the province to help with the addictions.

Mr. Feehan: I can't actually talk about that because that's in somebody else's budget. I understand that you don't like to talk about other people's budgets.

Mr. Wilson: We work very closely literally almost daily with that department, and I am very proud of all the things that we've been able to accomplish by working closely with that ministry.

Mr. Feehan: There's nothing in your department that is actually dedicated toward the reduction of homelessness. You haven't put money in your budget to reduce homelessness.

Mr. Wilson: Not everything is about money, Member Feehan. A lot of it is about boots on the ground. I don't know if you noticed, but I actually spent a night in a tent at 40 below raising money for a food bank. I don't recall seeing you out there doing that. There's a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes.

11:50

Mr. Feehan: A little under his skin, but, yeah, not enough time there.

Can you tell me about the indigenous internship program that was previously held in your government and was cut when you first came in? Have you given any reconsideration to introducing or – perhaps it's in the budget, and I just don't recognize it – to reinstituting the internship program to encourage indigenous people to learn about working with government and working in government?

Mr. Wilson: I know you read the budget very closely, but obviously you missed that line. It is coming back in 2023 there.

Mr. Feehan: There's nothing in this year again?

Mr. Wilson: It is coming back. I know you like to talk about future budgets, but you will see it in a future budget line.

Mr. Feehan: You seem to vary as to whether you're prepared to talk about other budgets or future budgets, depending on whether I'm asking the question or you're talking about it. Thank you; I appreciate that.

I wonder if we can just go back for a minute, the real other topic here. I'm just wondering about adequacy assessments by the ACO. Can you tell me what percentage of adequacy assessments have been rejected over the last year?

Mr. Wilson: Sorry; I'm choking up a little bit here. I don't have that detail with me. I'm sorry. I'm going to have to get back.

Mr. Feehan: Great. If that's something that could be put on paper and sent to me about what percentage of adequacy assessments have been rejected by the ACO and sent back to corporations in the oil field in order to have them do more work with the communities, I'd just like to know what's happening with that.

Mr. Wilson: We'll try to nail that down for you. I think I understand where you're coming from. Could you just clarify that for me?

Mr. Feehan: Well, corporations have to submit a report on the adequacy of their consultations with First Nations on oil field development. I just want to know what percentage of the assessment reports submitted by industry have been rejected by the ACO and have asked the corporations to go back and do more work.

Mr. Wilson: Okay. Thanks for that. They're nodding at me that they'll get you that information, so we'll nail that down for you and get it out to you as quick as we can.

Mr. Feehan: I appreciate that a lot.

I also just want to comment on the fact that the First Nations development fund, which is the money that comes from casinos, was dramatically reduced this year, of course, not through any fault of your own but through the closure of casinos and so on. I'm just wondering if there was any effort on the part of the government to help the First Nations with the sudden loss of significant amounts of money for their business development through the First Nations development fund.

Mr. Wilson: Could you just clarify that? I was just searching for some paperwork. Could you just run that by me one more time, please?

Mr. Feehan: Fine. I just noticed that because of the closure of casinos and so on, all of the COVID realities, the FNDF had a dramatic drop in this last year. No fault of your own, but I was just wondering if there was any project or any effort by the government to assist First Nations who suddenly saw such a dramatic decrease in their income. Is there any COVID program that helped them with that?

Mr. Wilson: Yeah. We were working with them very closely. I meet with them on a regular basis.

The Chair: Sorry to interrupt. Perhaps you can get a note back to Member Feehan on that answer.

We'll now move back to the government caucus for about five and a half minutes remaining in the meeting.

Mr. Getson: I appreciate it, Chairman, and, Minister, thanks again. I was talking about the AIOC and the Cascade project. I believe for the record that we've talked about that a bit. Chair, if I could, I would cede the rest of my time to my colleague from Calgary, MLA Yaseen from Calgary-North.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Yaseen.

Mr. Yaseen: Well, thank you, Chair, and thank you, Mr. Getson. My question is on the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation's allocation of funds, about \$8.5 million on page 59 of the business plan. I'm so happy to see that number there to support indigenous groups making investments in natural gas projects. That is close to me because of my oil and gas background. Can I ask you to please identify some of those potential projects that may be helped with that \$8.5 million? I know MLA Getson has gotten at that a little bit, too, in that area.

Mr. Wilson: I can't speak to the projects that they're reviewing at this time, but they are substantial. There's everything from oil and gas, like we talked about earlier, a lot of projects around that. As these projects come forward, we'll be able to give more

information. I'm hoping that within the next couple of months we'll be able to make some announcements of projects that are in the hopper right now, and then you'll be able to see what the board has been up to as they've been reviewing projects.

It's a big job. As you know, when you're doing a hundred-million-dollar project, you want to make sure you've got everything covered off properly, so there's a lot of background work and legal work and checking to make sure that everybody involved is capable of pulling off a project of that magnitude. We're very cautious to make sure that we're setting everybody up for success here and that moving into the future, they will be successful projects. Unfortunately, I can't tell you which projects are in the hopper right now, but I know at this time, I believe, they're reviewing over 150 different projects that have come forward. After the announcement on Cascade everybody realized that this is a real initiative, and it's moving forward. Now the excitement is out there to get projects on the ground.

Mr. Yaseen: Fair enough. Thank you.

Still speaking on key objective 1, found in the business plan on page 59, I know that you have been hearing from indigenous communities about their interest in pursuing natural resource development activities. Can you explain the consultation process that ACO uses when working with indigenous communities, please?

Mr. Wilson: The government of Alberta consultation policies and guidelines include key information on processing timelines and factors considered when assessing the level of adequacy of consultation. That process consists of three stages: we've got the preconsultation assessment, we carry out the consultation, and then we look at the adequacy of the consultation. Each step has its own set of requirements and associated timelines to ensure that the consultation process is consistent and clear and transparent for all of the parties. We have to uphold the honour of the Crown, and the ACO uses that same consultation process for everyone who wishes to develop natural resource development activities in Alberta.

Thank you for that question.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, and one more question: does the AIOC work with ACO to decide whether potential projects are okay to proceed?

Mr. Wilson: They're a separate board that looks at the projects on the business viability. That's what they consider, not the ACO.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Minister, and I will pass on my time to MLA Issik now.

The Chair: Go ahead, MLA Issik. You've got about one minute.

Ms Issik: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. Just really quickly, Minister, if you can do it in really fast time, can you just tell us about the progress that's being made on the regional drinking water tie-in project?

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Member, for that. All grants go to the water commission or the municipality. To date we've got 10 projects that may benefit on 14 First Nations that are under way. Two are complete in the construction phase, and two are in progress with capital funding allocated, and three have feasibility studies completed or under way. Transportation holds the funding, as we said before, and is responsible for the project management while Indigenous Relations is responsible for the relationship management of that. The Minister of Transportation would be

better to answer about the timeline portion of it, but I know I've been working closely with a couple of the proponents to move things along. It's looking really positive that we're going to get to . . .

The Chair: Thank you. I hesitate to interrupt, but I must advise the committee that the time allotted for consideration of the ministry's estimates has concluded. I would like to remind committee

members that we are scheduled to meet tomorrow, March 11, 2021, at 9 a.m. to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

For health reasons please remember to take your drinks and any other items with you as you leave.

Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 12 p.m.]

