



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Aboriginal Relations

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First Session**

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)

Also in Attendance

McDonald, Everett, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC)
Smith, Danielle, Highwood (W)

Office of the Auditor General Participants

Merwan Saher	Auditor General
Rob Driesen	Assistant Auditor General

Support Staff

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Christopher Tyrell	Committee Clerk
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Janet Schwegel	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Participants

Ministry of Aboriginal Relations

Peter Crossen, Director, First Nations Development Fund

Lorne Harvey, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services

Cameron Henry, Executive Director, Policy and Planning

Stan Rutwind, QC, Assistant Deputy Minister, Consultation and Land Claims

Bill Werry, Deputy Minister

8:31 a.m.

Wednesday, October 30, 2013

[Mr. Anderson in the chair]

The Chair: All right. I'm going to call this meeting to order. Good morning, everyone. I'd like to welcome you to our Public Accounts Committee this morning. I'm Rob Anderson, your chair as well as the MLA for Airdrie. I would like to welcome everyone in attendance today.

We're going to go around the table and introduce ourselves, including our guests who are around the table, and when we get to our guests, if there are specific people from your department behind you that you would like to introduce, you can do that as well. If you're called on in the back during an introduction, just kind of do one of those half-stand, half-wave things to help us out with identifying you. We'll start that on my right with the deputy chair.

Mr. Dorward: My name is David Dorward. I'm the MLA for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Donovan: Ian Donovan, MLA, Little Bow.

Mr. McDonald: Everett McDonald, Grande Prairie-Smoky, sitting in for Jason Luan.

Mr. Khan: Good morning. Stephen Khan, MLA, St. Albert.

Ms Pastoor: Bridget Pastoor, MLA, Lethbridge-East.

Mr. Bilous: Good morning. Deron Bilous, MLA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Jeneroux: Good morning. Matt Jeneroux, MLA, Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Hehr: Kent Hehr, MLA, Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Rutwind: Stan Rutwind, assistant deputy minister, consultation and land claims, Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Henry: Cameron Henry, executive director, policy and planning, Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Werry: Good morning. Bill Werry, Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

I'll just take the opportunity to introduce the staff behind me: Peter Crossen, who is our director of the First Nations development fund; Howard Wong, senior financial officer; Tracy Balash, who is working with us now on aboriginal women's issues; and David Dear, director of communications.

The Chair: Awesome. Make sure to speak into the microphones when you're introducing; otherwise, *Hansard* won't pick it up.

Mr. Harvey: Lorne Harvey, assistant deputy minister, corporate services, Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Driesen: Rob Driesen, Assistant Auditor General.

Mr. Saher: Merwan Saher, Auditor General.

Ms Smith: Danielle Smith, MLA, Highwood.

Mr. Stier: Pat Stier, MLA, Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Anglin: Joe Anglin, MLA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Hale: Jason Hale, MLA, Strathmore-Brooks.

Ms Fenske: Hello. Jacquie Fenske, MLA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Sarich: Good morning and welcome. Janice Sarich, MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

Dr. Massolin: Good morning. Philip Massolin, manager of research services.

Mr. Tyrell: Chris Tyrell, committee clerk.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

The microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are streamed live on the Internet and recorded in the *Hansard*. If everyone could speak really directly into the mike so that the *Hansard* folks can do their job effectively, that would be fantastic. I'll also mention that audio access and meeting transcripts can be obtained on the Legislative Assembly website. Also, please make sure to put your cellphones on vibrate or turn them off or whatever you'd like to do, but just make sure that they're not going off during the meeting if that's possible.

The first order of business is to approve the agenda. Do we have a mover that the agenda of the October 30, 2013, Standing Committee on Public Accounts meeting be approved as distributed? Mr. Anglin. Those in favour? Any opposed? Carried.

We're going to move on. The reports to be reviewed today are the Aboriginal Relations annual report 2012-2013; the February and July 2013 reports of the Auditor General as they relate to aboriginal issues; the 2012-13 annual report of the government of Alberta, the consolidated financial statements; and the Measuring Up progress report, again as it pertains to the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations. Members should have also received copies of two briefing documents, one by the Auditor General and one by committee research staff.

Joining us today are, obviously, representatives from Aboriginal Relations, and they've already introduced themselves and their staff.

Now, what we'll be doing here is having your ministry give an up to 10-minute overview of what you're doing, a presentation, and then we'll turn it over to the floor for questions. Go ahead.

Mr. Werry: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, everyone. I just want to start by reminding all of us who are at the meeting this morning that we're meeting in the traditional territory of Treaty 6 First Nations of Alberta. As these are the estimates for the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations, it's appropriate to remind you of that. It was the first numbered treaty in Alberta signed by Alberta First Nations, signed in 1876.

I want to begin by providing some context and highlights of the areas of work that may be of most interest to the committee. With more than a quarter of a million people who claim aboriginal ancestry, Alberta is home to one of the largest and fastest growing aboriginal populations in Canada. Aboriginal people are vital to Alberta's future, and the role of Aboriginal Relations is to build strong relationships with and between aboriginal communities, other levels of government, industry, and other stakeholders.

We had two key business goals for 2012-13: supporting the economic and social development of aboriginal people and communities and co-ordinating and strengthening Alberta's approach to aboriginal consultation and land claims to enhance resource development certainty. We have invested our time and resources strategically, and we continue to work with aboriginal leadership and our partners to find practical solutions to complex issues.

I would like to first address the report of the First Nations development fund, that was released by the office of the Auditor General. We take the recommendations of the Auditor General very seriously. They were related to improving consistency of the fund's application process and how fund applications are documented. I can tell you that all of the recommendations have been accepted, and we are in the process of implementing them. This will make for a better process and stronger procedures overall. That said, we're proud of the results that we've had with the program, and it continues to be a key resource for First Nations communities. Last year \$120 million flowed into the fund, and since its inception the program has contributed more than \$610 million to 1,300 projects across the province.

First Nations have asked for changes to the program, and I'm pleased to advise that as of now the three treaty organizations have made an agreement to move forward on a review of the program, and we're currently in the process of developing the terms of reference for that review. We'll be working with First Nations and the Gaming and Liquor Commission to ensure that the processes are mutually acceptable to all parties.

Strong relationships are the key to addressing critical issues such as First Nations educational outcomes, employment, and economic development. Since becoming head of the ministry last spring, Minister Campbell has visited over half of the province's First Nations and all eight Métis settlements. Relationship building has been the reason we hosted the Alberta-First Nations Opportunities Forum here in Edmonton last December. The forum brought together Premier Redford, Minister Campbell, cabinet members, and First Nations leaders for discussions on a new way of working together to fulfill the aspirations of First Nations people in Alberta.

We received feedback from chiefs who said that these discussions were positive and important. That said, we have made it clear to First Nations that we will continue working with them to address key issues such as economic opportunities and education. In fact, we'll be hosting a second forum in December.

In 2012-13 we completed the final stages of our review of Alberta's consultation policy, which involved close collaboration with other ministries and significant input from First Nations, industry, and municipalities. The result of this work was Alberta's new consultation policy, which was released in August. We've ensured the updated consultation process is consistent, fair, effective, and clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of all parties. The new policy includes a number of important shifts which will co-ordinate our government's consultation efforts and strengthen the consultation process.

8:40

We have also continued to improve the quality of life for the 85,000-plus Métis people who call Alberta home, the largest Métis population in Canada. Together with the Metis Settlements General Council and the province's eight settlements, in March we finalized the long-term arrangements, a 10-year, \$85 million funding commitment that will help the settlements become self-sustaining communities. The agreement is an important step towards a new fiscal relationship between Alberta and the settlements that is similar to what the province has with other local governments.

One of our ministry's priorities is to support initiatives that increase economic opportunities and enhance the social well-being of aboriginal women in Alberta. In 2012-13 we invested in projects through organizations like Women Building Futures and the Aboriginal Women's Professional Association to support aboriginal women in developing leadership skills and exploring

entrepreneurship. We also funded community organizations for programs aimed at addressing the issues of violence against aboriginal women and girls.

In the past fiscal year we also continued to address the growing needs of urban aboriginal people in Alberta. More than 60 per cent of aboriginal people in Alberta live in major urban centres. They have important social and economic contributions to make to our cities, and we want to ensure they have every opportunity to do so.

Friendship centres play a major role in delivering services for aboriginal people living in or making transition to urban areas. In 2012-13 we provided advisory support and more than \$750,000 in funding to the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association and, through them, to 20 friendship centres in the province. We also supported the delivery of the urban aboriginal strategy by providing funding to service providers in Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge.

These are just a few of the milestones from the past year. We continue to make significant progress on our key priorities, and we have carried this momentum forward into 2013-14. We are focusing our resources and efforts on what we do best, building relationships to ensure aboriginal Albertans are able to contribute to and take advantage of the social and economic opportunities in this province.

We would be glad to answer any questions you have at this time. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll turn it over to Mr. Saher.

Mr. Saher: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My comments are on material included in our July 2013 public report, and the deputy minister has just referred to them. Starting on page 17 of that report, we made three recommendations to the Department of Aboriginal Relations that apply generally to the First Nations development fund grant program: first, formalize and communicate interpretation of eligible uses of grant funds to all First Nations; secondly, improve review processes on complex grant applications and application-supporting information; and thirdly, monitor and correct instances of First Nation noncompliance with grant agreement requirements.

Included in the ministry's 2012-2013 annual report is our unqualified auditor's report on the financial statements of the ministry for the year ended March 31, 2013. Also, we reviewed one of the ministry's performance measures included in that annual report. Other than the recommendations I've just mentioned, the ministry has no other outstanding recommendations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Auditor General.

All right. We will start the questioning here. We have roughly 37 minutes for our Progressive Conservative caucus, 18 and a half for the Wildrose, nine and a quarter for the Liberals and NDs. We'll start with the first half of the PC caucus's time.

Go ahead, Mr. Dorward. You referee that.

Mr. Dorward: All right. Thank you, Chair. I will start, colleagues. Then give me a wave, and we'll move around the room.

I'd like to talk about aboriginal individuals working in the province of Alberta and the unemployment. According to the statistics that our researchers have pulled together, unemployment, generally speaking, in the province is going down. For all aboriginals off-reserve unemployment is going up, First Nations off-reserve is going up, and Métis off-reserve actually dropped a little bit.

This is a global question. As it pertains to the things that you have contained in your annual report and your responsibilities in this area, what performance measures do you put into place or have that might allow us, when we pick up the annual report for your area, to be able to feel comfortable that you have performance measures in this area and that you're monitoring things and moving ahead with working towards improvements in that area? Is that something that you take on as a ministry, for example, as a starting point?

Mr. Werry: Thank you. We obviously pay attention to the overall employment statistics that you're referring to, and you're correct that employment amongst aboriginal people is rising in Alberta. We do specifically monitor the initiatives that we fund under our aboriginal economic partnerships area, where we had 49 projects in 2012-13. Many of those projects are focused on creating opportunities for aboriginal people to generate training and employment types of programs to ensure that people get opportunities for the work that is available but also to encourage aboriginal communities to structure their own business opportunities and explore entrepreneurship. So we do monitor the individual impact of each of those initiatives and keep an eye on their effectiveness as an area of support.

Mr. Dorward: Okay. I'm going to ask kind of a serious question, a few questions, and then I'll ask a more global question, I guess. If I look at the message from the minister on page 3 of the annual report, in the last paragraph it says, "The Alberta government knows that a good education is the most important path to success for First Nations youth and adults." We're talking about a good education there. What I'm trying to get is a sense of how your department works with the government. The minister felt compelled to indicate that a good education is important for aboriginal individuals, but is there any stewardship within the department to deliver that or to measure that or to interact with that? And that's just an example of one that we could say: there are things that Human Services does. Does your ministry take some ownership or interest in what Human Services is doing relative to the aboriginal issues? In other words, who is? If it isn't you, who is it with respect to aboriginal relations?

Mr. Werry: In terms of our role we are the ministry that has the lead with respect to the relationship-building component of the government's work with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in the province. We do work very closely with the departments of Education and Health and Human Services. We also work closely with the departments on the resource development side, and our role in that context is to help them connect to the aboriginal community in the most effective way possible.

By way of illustration, Alberta is the only jurisdiction in Canada that currently has a three-way memorandum of understanding, involving the government of Canada, the government of Alberta, and the three treaty organizations, on education. There are eight subtables currently working, and we play a facilitating role in that process together with the Department of Education. Obviously, the goals of that work are to improve the educational outcomes of, in this case, First Nation students in Alberta.

We do know that there are 10,000 First Nation students in band-operated schools and about 30,000 students in provincial schools. Regrettably, there are 10,000 students who are not in school. So we're continuing to work with the government of Canada and with the Department of Education on that three-way MOU with the three treaty organizations to try and address that very, very, very key issue. Our role there is in essence as a trusted adviser to all

parties because of our relationships with the three treaty organizations when it comes to First Nations' education and because of our ability to bring their voices to the table, not to speak for them but to create pathways for them to come to the table to raise their own issues. That's very much part of our role.

Mr. Dorward: The answer to this is probably no. Is there a potential that, for example, the Ministry of Education has a group that is looking after aboriginal schooling and you have a group that's looking after aboriginal schooling and we have two groups that are working down some pathway that might not be the same? Maybe another question could be: is some of your ministry staff embedded into the Ministry of Education to be able to further those kinds of issues?

Mr. Werry: No, we don't. We work really hard at not duplicating the work of other ministries. Human Services has a group of folks who have aboriginal responsibility. Education has a group of folks who have that responsibility. We work closely with their teams to make sure that they're able to connect to the people they need to connect to and that they're aware of the issues that are at play in the various aboriginal communities around the province, that we are very close to. We try and stay close to the issues that are going on in the community so we can play that role of trusted adviser.

8:50

Mr. Dorward: Mrs. Sarich, did you want to take some time? Okay.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Thank you very much for your brief presentation thus far. I'd just like to explore one particular area. You had commented about the role and function of your area to build these relationships, and there seems to be, as indicated in your annual report, very limited information in the financial reporting of the number of initiatives that you have going on. Also, I'd like to explore even that crossministerial function if I may.

For example, I'm wondering if you could comment on and provide to the committee some details – and this would be a written response back to the Public Accounts Committee – on all of the initiatives that you have completed and the dollars allocated to do that and the results achieved because there doesn't seem to be enough information provided in the annual report. I was wondering if you could comment this morning about why there seems to be such thin information on very important things about how public money is being spent.

Mr. Werry: There are, clearly, limitations on the size and scope of annual reports. There is additional information on our website about the specific activities. As I indicated, we funded 49 projects through our economic partnerships area this past year. All of those projects had a specific focus and a specific set of outcomes, and we do have that information. We could provide you, in written response to the committee, a summary of that work. In addition, we do have a report of the kinds of projects that were funded through the First Nations development fund, recognizing that the First Nations are the primary determiners of what those projects are. We monitor that they sit within the three broad categories that are supported under the program, but the specific initiatives in those communities are determined by the communities.

One of the keys to the way in which we carry out our role – and it's really important for committee members, I think, to be aware – is that it's extremely important to work with First Nations based on their understanding and perception of the issues and priorities in their communities. Our First Nations friends in particular talk

about, “Nothing for us without us,” so we work very closely with them in determining the kinds of initiatives that get supported to address issues in the community.

Mrs. Sarich: Yeah. I’d like to interrupt right here because we’re thin on time as well.

You do provide that crossministerial function to help other ministries understand the building of the relationships, and I was wondering if you could provide a written response back to the Public Accounts Committee in terms of what the financial commitment is when you do that type of work. So if it stretches into Human Services, what cost and what benefit back to the department have been achieved? I think that we’re a little bit thin on information even by a given department about that interaction with your particular area and the public money that is being utilized to do that particular function so that it’s clear to the public and to anyone who may have questions about that and what those interactions may be.

Moving on, you had mentioned the economic capacity building fund. There’s another one for partnering with businesses. There are quite a few projects, approximately \$2.7 million being spent in this particular area, but there isn’t a really detailed account as to the results achieved in a publishable way so that the public or even this Public Accounts Committee can go figure out: well, you spent this sum of money; what were the deliverables, what fell short, and what are the recommendations as you move forward? I’m wondering if you could provide a written response back on those particular areas as well.

Because there’s some difficulty here that’s related to the financial reporting aspect – and our job and role and responsibility is to help the Auditor General – I’d be recommending that in the future there be some consideration for a value-for-money audit function so that some of these areas can be clarified not only for Public Accounts but for the public in general. On the dollars allocated, you know, for the overall operation, we can see what goes to wages and that, but when we’re talking specifically about your role and function and how the money is being spent, I think it’s very important to build confidence that the deliverables are in fact delivering what is intended, if there’s room for improvement. So then we can really appreciate all of the wonderful progress being made in the department.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Dorward: Okay. MLA Khan, go ahead.

Mr. Khan: Thank you very much. And, gentlemen, thank you so much for your presentation. During your presentation you mentioned the meeting last year with the chiefs and the Premier and cabinet, and I was fortunate enough to participate in that. It was a very powerful meeting, and I would encourage you to try to maintain those types of relationships. I also want to acknowledge the excellent work that Minister Robin Campbell is doing, leading the ministry and building such strong relationships with stakeholders.

With that said, I have a couple of questions. When it comes to postsecondary education, we know that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples are disproportionately low in terms of their participation. We also know that a couple of significant barriers to that would be transportation and child care because we know that for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit the facts are that they start their families sooner, younger. I’m just curious to know if there are any initiatives currently within the department to address those barriers, particularly the transportation and child care issues.

Mr. Werry: There’s nothing specifically targeted to those issues although we do work closely with Enterprise and Advanced Education, ensuring that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people understand the supports that are in place for them to access postsecondary education.

Mr. Khan: Okay. I think it goes without saying that the more we can engage the FNMI folks in any aspects with skill development or postsecondary education, their opportunities for success here in Alberta grow astronomically. So I would encourage the department to push very hard in that direction.

I’d like to shift gears a little bit and ask a question in regard to the Métis settlements long-term governance. We know that we as a government are going to be spending \$85 million over the next 10 years on Métis settlements improvements such as improvements in governance, education, and infrastructure. How is the department going to ensure that these tangible objectives are met and that Albertans are going to receive value for that \$85 million?

Mr. Werry: Thanks for that question. First of all, the \$85 million is governed by an agreement that has set out within it specific outcomes and milestones. It also has levers in the agreements that if those milestones are not met, funding will not flow. There’s a specific set of outcomes that we’re looking for within that agreement, including improving the governance capabilities of the settlements and also ensuring that the funding that’s provided is provided to the elements that have been set out in the agreement. So there are some very specific conditions within the agreement, and those conditions have been agreed to by the Métis Settlements General Council and, by extension, the eight settlements.

Mr. Khan: Okay. Thank you.

Just a supplemental to that question if I can, Deputy Chair. How did we arrive at that figure of \$85 million?

Mr. Werry: The figure was arrived at through a series of independent studies about the needs within those communities, about the historic funding relationship with the province, and about the kinds of monies that we thought would be required to move those communities towards a self-sustaining status.

The structure of the agreement is that it has a higher level of funding in the initial seven years of the agreement and lower funding in the last three years of the agreement, with the ultimate goal that by the end of the agreement those communities would be receiving the same supports as other similar communities in Alberta and would be able to manage their affairs in a manner similar to other communities in Alberta.

9:00

Mr. Khan: Thank you very much.

Ms Fenske: Thank you for the information. I’m wearing my MLA Calahasen hat here for a second since she’s not with us. One of her key concerns happens to be children in care. Would you please tell me what your relationship is with respect to Human Services in that area, and is your department funding any of those initiatives?

Mr. Werry: First of all, we continue to play the role I outlined earlier as trusted adviser to other ministries. Actually, I personally had the opportunity to co-chair a meeting between Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta and Human Services this past year on the issue of children in care. I just want to share for the information of the committee that one of the First Nations in Treaty 8 has no children in care, and that would be Loon River First Nation. It was a very

good conversation between Human Services and the child and family service agency CEOs and the chiefs for Treaty 8 First Nations in Alberta. I think they're on the pathway to a clearer understanding about how that system works.

With respect to your specific question there are many initiatives funded under the First Nations development fund that actually support these areas of social development within First Nation communities, and obviously we play a role in assisting Human Services in reviewing and supporting those initiatives.

The Chair: Thanks a lot. We'll come back, Ms Fenske.

Let's move on to the representative from the Wildrose caucus, which is our Leader of the Official Opposition. She also moonlights as the aboriginal affairs critic. Take it away.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Werry and your staff, as well for being here today.

I want to first compliment the minister. When I first started out visiting First Nations, there was a pretty damaged relationship, and I think the minister has done a very good job of repairing some of the damage of course caused by the refusal to approve the First Nations refinery, the land-use framework implemented with a perceived lack of consultation, and the troubles with the River Cree Casino, which I'll ask you a little bit more about. I think that it's pretty clear that having the ministry separate as opposed to amalgamated, as it was for a time, has been accepted very well by the First Nations members that I talked to. I do follow the minister's Twitter feed, so I know he does an awful lot of travel around the province. So just complimenting your minister on that.

I would also say that what struck me with the Auditor General's report is that it seems the chief complaint is that you're setting the bar too low for yourselves, that the achievement measures could be more challenging. I think that there was an implicit challenge to try to improve those performance measures. It shouldn't really be that much of a challenge for your department in your senior role of acting as an adviser to have, for instance, a contact at all 48 nations, which you've achieved. That sounds like another: it's time to raise the bar.

Plus, the issue of the number of projects being supported seems to be not a particularly good measure of outcomes. It's a measure of activity, but I think that there's some sense that we need to start looking at how we're going to measure outcomes. I know that the Department of International and Intergovernmental Relations used to be together with yours. They have since commenced a fairly aggressive performance measure target. I don't know if any of that kind of thinking has spilled over into Aboriginal Relations and whether or not you're rethinking the performance measures. Maybe you can comment on that and give us some understanding of the complexity of identifying outcome measures when we're dealing in this area.

Mr. Werry: First of all, I'll be sure to pass on your compliments to Minister Campbell when I see him next. With respect to the performance measures that are in the current report, the one that's under consideration today, those measures in some respects are proxies for the work that is going on, and I think it's generally accepted that we all have more work to do in enhancing those performance measures. I took MLA Sarich's questions earlier as being along that same line. We're certainly listening to the concerns of the committee in that regard, and we'll be looking at those issues moving forward.

One of the things that we are doing right now – and it speaks to where you started, which was about our job being ensuring good relationships. One of the challenges of having performance

measures around a ministry whose job it is to build relationships is that those measures can be a bit more difficult to pin down. However, one of the things that we have embarked on this year is a very clear articulation of our role as a ministry so that it's clear to others what role we play. Many of the issues that are of most concern to us are actually in the mandate of other ministries, whether it's Education, Health, Human Services, Environment, or whatever, so the first step is to really clarify what our role is vis-à-vis the activities of government and being clear about that. That's the foundation for building those good, strong performance measures. That work is under way right now. Once that work is finalized, we'll be doing the necessary work to build in the performance measures.

Ms Smith: If I could just make an observation. It seems like there is good data for unemployment for Métis and First Nations off-reserve, but I don't think I've seen good stats for unemployment on-reserve or on-settlement. I just wonder: as you're going through the process of developing your performance measures, do you not see a role for your ministry in assessing outcomes on-reserve and on-settlement? Do you see your role more as assessing outcomes for those aboriginal citizens who choose to live off-reserve and off-settlement?

Mr. Werry: You raised earlier in your question the complexity of establishing performance measures. One of the areas where it's extremely difficult to get reliable employment information is trying to collect employment information on-reserve. The data collection challenges have been well documented. It is very, very difficult given the way First Nations people see employment and the way they see outside individuals. They're reluctant to share information with outside individuals on-reserve, and I think that applies on-settlement as well. You're probably also well aware that there is a fair bit of back-and-forth traffic between reserves, settlements, and urban communities, so at any one point in time it can be difficult to determine what is the exact population of a given reserve or a given settlement. So there are some real challenges within the data.

We're conscious of that, and we do rely heavily on information from other sources. For us to go and collect that direct-source data, I think the cost would be questionable in terms of the benefit unless we were able to somehow engage with Canada and with the First Nations and their concurrence with that data collection. So there are some real solid challenges. I don't think I'm telling you anything you don't know.

Ms Smith: Yes. Let me just put out my wish list anyway. If we could actually figure out what graduation rates were from high school, if we could figure out what the level of postsecondary attainment was for BAs, MAs, and PhDs, and if we could figure out the number of businesses that were in operation on-reserve and on-settlement, I think those would give us some good measures of entrepreneurship, engagement as well as the capacity to be able to enter the workforce. I'll just put those out there as potentials for you to look at.

I do want to switch gears. Looking at the First Nations development fund, I know that during the election last year the Enoch First Nation came very close to bankruptcy because of a dispute about how the dollars would flow through to them from the First Nations development fund. I think it got resolved. Can you give me some certainty and comfort in knowing that that kind of thing won't happen again with any of the other casinos that are operating? I don't fully understand how they came so close to defaulting. It does seem like it came to a dispute with how the

department was managing those dollar transfers. Can you just elaborate on that?

Mr. Werry: One of the important things to understand on the nature of the First Nations development fund is that the proceeds from the First Nations development fund cannot go back towards casino operations. So the First Nations development fund application from Enoch, because it was an application to restructure the debt on the entire complex, had to be broken down to be clear about what proportion of that application was actually related to the operation of the rest of the resort, not the casino. It took us a fair bit of time to be very clear about what exactly that was, and we had good dialogue back and forth between ourselves and officials and lawyers and accountants and all the folks from Enoch Cree Nation, and we were able to come to an agreement on what that number needed to be and what percentage of their debt was actually eligible under the First Nations development fund. That matter has been resolved, and the casino is operating.

9:10

Ms Smith: Do you anticipate that we would have a problem like that with any of the other casinos, or was this a unique and one-off situation?

Mr. Werry: Well, I think the problem with Enoch allowed us to be really clear about how the policy needs to be interpreted. It's very clear now that we have the methodology to be able to determine what proportion of any given piece is actually casino business and what is a resort. You're well aware that the Enoch facility has a hotel and convention complex and all of those other pieces. Some of the other casinos in the province have some of that but not as much as Enoch has, so they're more pure casino operations. Again, I think we have policy clarity, and we have the tools to address those issues going forward.

Ms Smith: That's good.

The other question I had was about the philosophy behind the First Nations development fund. I think you'd mentioned that the three grand chiefs, the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs, want to talk with you about analyzing how that program is working. It seems to me that it's similar on the municipal side to an MSI type of funding, where the dollars flow through on a formula basis. Can you just tell me if my impression of that is correct, and if you are thinking of changing it, what are some of the considerations that you would put on the table for negotiation?

Mr. Werry: Right now the fund exists to support activities on individual First Nations, with a higher proportion of the funding going to First Nations that have casinos and the rest of the funding being spread across the rest of the First Nations in Alberta. The First Nations, in wanting to look at it, have some questions about the amount of money that does go back towards the lottery-funded programs. They've raised that question, perhaps looking for a higher proportion of the revenue as a starting point.

However, there is a need to be clear, as the office of the Auditor General has already identified, that we need to be very diligent about the accountability provisions. We are really open to hearing a conversation from the three treaty organizations about what their aspirations are with the fund. We've got lots of evidence that the fund has done a lot of really good work in communities, and as I've toured some of those communities with the minister, we've heard that from people directly. As we go into the conversations about how this needs to work, we want to make sure that everyone understands the roles and responsibilities and where the accountabilities lie.

We have also worked with them on the importance of building capacity, so the First Nations development fund has become a capacity-building tool for First Nations in improving their own financial acumen and improving community planning and all those pieces. That's kind of where we're going with that.

Ms Smith: Great. Thank you for that answer.
How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have roughly seven minutes.

Ms Smith: Thank you. I won't go too deeply into it – I'm sure someone else will – but it was pointed out that the 2012-13 results document wasn't available for the assessment of the economic capacity-building and strategic economic initiatives. I'm just wondering what the delay is on that.

Mr. Werry: Some of that delay rests with reporting from grant recipients. We can't finalize the document until we get all the reports in. Our staff do work very closely with those individuals. There were also some challenges with the way our year-end works and when projects wrap up, so that resulted in a bit of a delay at the end.

Ms Smith: When do we expect to get that?

Mr. Werry: I think most of that work is done.

Ms Smith: Weeks?

Mr. Werry: Yeah.

Ms Smith: Okay. I want to ask some questions about the collaboration you have with other ministries. I think it's been mentioned multiple times that Aboriginal Relations is not the sole focal point. I have to tell you of my own unsatisfying experience at trying to get some information, trying to get two written questions responded to about the dollars that are spent for aboriginal housing in urban centres and aboriginal health in urban centres. As you know, the long, long process of written questions wound its way through, and at the end it was: we spend nothing on either of those. To me, that seems like a very inefficient way. It sounds to me that that's something the minister could have told me, you know, in a brief phone call.

For me to actually be able to represent the aboriginal bands that I talk to on some of the issues they have, I think I need to have a better understanding and more efficiency in getting to the right people if it's not your department. I suppose I could write written questions on this until the cows come home and still not get an answer, but I think that our aboriginal citizens, especially those living in Calgary and Edmonton, deserve some of these answers.

So let me just go through a few of these so I can understand. If I want to know how much money is spent on aboriginal health in urban centres, how do I get that information?

Mr. Werry: Well, you're asking a question that's directly related to the Department of Health but in collaboration with Inuit and First Nations health authorities in the government of Canada. You are asking a question that potentially has two different tracks to be answered. As part of the work we're doing on our role, we're also looking with other ministries to try to identify a point person in each ministry on aboriginal issues, and as we build that out over the next year, that might make it easier for someone to help you find a pathway to that answer.

Ms Smith: So is that a commitment, then, that in each ministry – I mean, I would need someone in Finance who can assist me with some of the disputes or questions about casino delays. I would need to understand from Agriculture what the collaboration is with First Nations. In Culture I'd like to understand what's happening with friendship centres, whether or not they're closing, which is what we're hearing. With Education we know that the Piikani have a special arrangement where the dollars go directly to the school board rather than to the band, and with the change in Education we would need to make sure that that relationship is preserved. In Energy the First Nations refinery is still an issue that the bands are concerned about. In Enterprise and Advanced Education CS Cyber wants to be able to extend its collaboration to be able to do more online education.

In ESRD there are obviously grazing leases that are going to be impacted by the Tsuu T'ina deal. There are issues as well with water rights, potentially, with the federal government having transferred more authority down to the provincial level. In Health, there are still issues about locums and how we get proper supports, especially in our rural and remote communities. In Human Services obviously children's services remain an issue, and there is a band that is looking to try to be able to get their own centre established in Edmonton to be able to provide the support. In Infrastructure we hear that seniors would like to be able to have seniors' homes built on-reserve so that they are able to be taken care of in their own language.

In Justice and Sol Gen we obviously see that there are issues with a disproportionate number of our aboriginal citizens in jails, and we need to understand why that is. In Municipal Affairs we have all kinds of disputes with adjacent municipalities and also issues of aboriginal housing: how is that supported, and how do those dollars flow through? In Service Alberta we know that our federal government is going to be trying to do more to acknowledge First Nations' property rights. Does land titles have a role in that? What role will Service Alberta play in that? In Tourism, Parks and Recreation, clearly, there would be a number of our tourism initiatives that would be related to First Nations. In Transportation I've already mentioned the Tsuu T'ina ring road deal.

So as you can see, there are multiple issues that are being raised with me as I travel the province, but it seems to me that I don't actually have a clear path for understanding how any of these can get resolved. So I've put a lot on the table. I don't know if you want to come back with a written response about who my contact would be for each of those and what my clear path forward would be on each of those, but I would sure appreciate that.

Mr. Werry: So let me just add a little clarity to what I've already said if I might. Can I respond briefly?

The Chair: Yes. Absolutely.

Mr. Werry: Thank you. We're in the process of building up this role document and set of relationships with the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations, and part of that is a dialogue with other departments. I'm not going to sit here and commit those other departments – probably not good practice – but I will tell you that we understand the issues you're raising. As you raise those issues, obviously, aboriginal individuals can struggle with making those connections as well.

So we do play a path-finding role with those folks in helping them find their way to some of the supports that may or may not be available. Keep in mind that for individuals on-reserve there is the federal jurisdiction issue that comes into play, so it's not all

within our purview. We are working on that issue, but I can't commit my colleagues until the work is done.

9:20

Ms Smith: How much more time do I have?

The Chair: Forty-five seconds.

Ms Smith: I'm sure we'll have another opportunity to talk again in a year. I'm going to express positive hope that that actually occurs because that would be of incredible help. What I might suggest is: could you also consider, then, finding a liaison officer to work with MLAs' offices? The Minister of Health just recently identified an individual that we're able to call if we want to do some path finding for our constituents who are having trouble winding their way through the health system. So as you're putting the structure in place, if there was a particular individual that our Aboriginal Relations critic or any of my colleagues – many of my colleagues have relationships with First Nations in their area – could call as a single point of contact so that we can find those paths and answer the questions that are being posed to us, I would just ask you to consider that as well.

Mr. Werry: I'd be happy to consider that.

The Chair: Awesome. Thank you very much.

Let's move on to the Liberal caucus. Mr. Hehr, you have nine minutes and 15 seconds.

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the ministry for being here to inform us of the good work that your department is implementing and trying to move forward on. I will agree with the hon. opposition leader. I think the move to having a Ministry of Aboriginal Relations has been seen as a positive move in the community and, on a level of respect, as good, at least symbolic reasons for it. I understand that your ministry is going to work on some tangible results to follow.

Looking at the Auditor General's findings and the like, it seems difficult to get a clear handle on some of the financial arrangements and the details and what the outcomes are of what your department is trying to do. You've given a pretty substantive explanation of that, that you're working with a whole bunch of ministries and working through the process as we speak. My questions relate to specifically what the ministry does in that it provides a variety of grants and funding that support economic and community development and support for consultation capacity development and traditional use studies. The most significant of these grant programs is the First Nations development fund, which represents 79 per cent of the ministry's 2012-2013 total expenses. FNDF is supported by a portion of revenues from government-owned slot machines in First Nations casinos in Alberta. My questions are related to that.

The Auditor General put forward in his July 2013 report, extensively in pages 17 through 28 of that document, a series of three recommendations. What steps has the ministry taken to implement these recommendations? When does the ministry expect to complete this implementation? Has an implementation plan been developed? Has the ministry considered whether any of the recommendations related to FNDF may be applicable to other ministry grant programs?

Mr. Werry: Let me respond to the three recommendations in order if I might. In terms of the first recommendation, which was that we formalize and communicate the interpretation of eligible uses, formal project eligibility guidelines were drafted pursuant to

that recommendation and are being implemented to improve the process. The guidelines have been communicated to First Nations partners via our liaison officers in an annual workshop that we have with the First Nations folks who are recipients of FNDF funding.

The second recommendation was that we improve our process in reviewing and approving grant applications by formalizing additional review processes in the case of complex grant applications. In that regard we've officially begun implementing new procedures for applications deemed as high risk. Those were the kinds of applications that the office of the Auditor General was referring to. For those applications we seek appropriate professional advice, so we get advice from outside accounting and auditing firms to support the review and the ultimate recommendation on those projects to the minister.

In the case of the third recommendation it was recommended that we improve our monitoring processes by consistently ensuring that First Nations comply with the reporting requirements. We've been moving on that recommendation as well. We consistently collaborate with First Nations, first of all, to ensure that the processes are well understood by our partners. We audit First Nations to ensure compliance with grant agreements and have increased our on-site visits to First Nations. The grant information system has now been upgraded to allow for that reporting to be tracked electronically.

We've moved on all three of those recommendations from the OAG report. We've fully accepted them, and we're moving forward to implement them.

Mr. Hehr: Okay. Well, will some of these things you've moved on be available in public reporting documents or on the website or something to reflect better information out to our First Nations partners and to further facilitate openness and transparency to what your department is doing?

Mr. Werry: We're certainly pleased to make that information available. We've made it available to First Nations communities, who are the people who make the applications and are the beneficiaries of the program. We do publish a report on the program. We're happy to make that information available.

Mr. Hehr: Okay. Another key recommendation was on page 26 of the Auditor General's report. Some of the key findings were:

- The department did not consistently monitor First Nations for or take action to correct non-compliance with the grant agreement.
- The department did not document its analyses to compare actual to budget project costs or obtain explanations for variances.

You've alluded to it, but without ongoing monitoring to ensure grant recipients are complying with the grant agreements, the department may not be able to determine a whole host of things, whether the grant program is actually having any benefit, being used correctly, and the like.

If you could consider these two questions. What process is the ministry applying on a consistent basis to ensure that grant recipients are complying with the funding requirements? What process has the ministry adopted to ensure that actual to budget project costs are analyzed and variances appropriately explained and supported?

Mr. Werry: Just to help you understand how we handle FNDF, we have a group at the front end who assist groups with applications, understanding what's eligible, putting their projects in. We give them assistance with that. We conduct workshops for them.

We do capacity support so they put in proper applications in the first place. We have a separate group that's an audit group that actually audits FNDF applications. When First Nations are in noncompliance, we have a three-stage process for advising them of that, giving them a chance to correct it, and ultimately we can suspend them so that they're no longer eligible for further projects until the money has been accounted for and/or potentially returned.

Mr. Hehr: In your view, have you adequately addressed these concerns so we won't have to see these recommendations in future Auditor General work?

Mr. Werry: I'm very confident of that.

Mr. Hehr: Okay. Well, we'll see.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That's it? Okay. You still had a whole minute and 20 seconds. Think of what could have been covered.

Mr. Hehr: That's all right.

The Chair: Okay. Just kidding.

Mr. Bilous – nine and half minutes – from the NDP caucus.

Mr. Bilous: I'm happy to borrow the minute and a half from the Liberals.

I'll start off by thanking you for being here and your ministry for all of their hard work. I also appreciate the fact that you recognized that we are in fact on Treaty 6 traditional lands.

I want to start off by just asking a question, and the reasons why I'm asking this will become clear very quickly. When we talk about working with aboriginal peoples and not for aboriginal peoples, I think it's important. You know, in your ministry's objective or mandate there's the employability side, there's a workforce side, and there's an education side. I'm curious to know: within the ministry right now can you tell me the number of aboriginal people that are working in the Aboriginal Relations ministry? I can appreciate that it would be self-identified.

9:30

Mr. Werry: I can't tell you today. I can get you that number.

Mr. Bilous: Could you?

The other piece that I'm interested in, especially because of the collaboration that takes place between your ministry and all the other ministries, is finding out the number of aboriginal people working in each of the ministries. I think it would be a very useful tool because, again, I think what fits with the workforce strategy would be to identify, you know, how many people are employed within the ministry. If not, it begs the question: why not?

Mr. Werry: I'll get that number for you. We do have a lot of aboriginal people working in our ministry.

Mr. Bilous: Okay. Thank you.

A quick question, and forgive my ignorance. There are a couple of First Nations who do not have reserve lands within Alberta. Can they access the First Nations development fund or not?

Mr. Werry: Right now Peerless Trout First Nation does not have reserve lands. Even though the treaty land entitlement claim has been settled, the reserve lands haven't been allocated because they're in the process of being surveyed. The Assembly of Treaty Chiefs passed a resolution asking that they be included in the First

Nations development fund, so at their request we have included Peerless Trout First Nation in the First Nations development fund. Similarly, you're probably well aware that Lubicon is in a similar situation. On those matters we take the recommendation of what's referred to as the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs.

Mr. Bilous: So have they recommended the Lubicon Cree have access to the First Nations development fund?

Mr. Werry: Yes.

Mr. Bilous: Excellent. Thank you.

Okay. A little bit of a preamble for my next question. The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations works with the Ministry of Human Services to deliver two grant programs designed to encourage industry partnerships and strengthen economic capacity. It's the economic capacity building, the ECB, and the strategic economic initiative programs. Obviously, there are a number of qualifications for a program or organization to receive their grant funding. What's interesting is that there's also a list of prohibitions for projects, or purposes for which ECB and SEI cannot be used. Does either ministry have a list of priority funding areas to achieve timely and optimal results for aboriginal communities on a cost-effective basis, or is there a plan to formulate such a list?

Mr. Werry: Sorry. Could you repeat that question for me?

Mr. Bilous: Sure. There's a list of prohibitions for projects, or purposes for which ECB and SEI cannot be used. I'm wondering if either ministry, Aboriginal Relations or Human Services, has a list of priority funding areas to achieve timely and optimal results for aboriginal communities.

Mr. Werry: We can get that list for you.

Mr. Bilous: Okay. Excellent.

My next question. The Aboriginal Relations annual report 2012-13 highlights six of the 49 projects funded by ECB and SEI. I'm curious to know why there's no publicly available information on the other 43 projects. I think you've answered that to an extent, that you're waiting for the recipients to get back to you. Do you have an idea of when that information will be made publicly available?

Mr. Werry: I think I've already answered that question. Probably in the next few weeks we should be wrapping up the outstanding pieces, keeping in mind that that relies on some others. But that's where we're headed with that.

Mr. Bilous: The memorandum of understanding was signed in February 2010 between Canada, Alberta, and the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs and, obviously, provides a framework for collaboration. Are there any initiatives to expand the educational programs to nonaboriginal populations to increase amongst the general student population knowledge and understanding of the complex history of indigenous peoples, especially around residential schools, treaties, treaty rights, and then, obviously, culture and history?

Mr. Werry: That's a question that, as you probably know, is in the mandate of the Department of Education. We are working with them on that right now, and their intention, I believe, is to enhance all Alberta curriculum with respect to the history and culture of aboriginal peoples.

Mr. Bilous: Okay. I'm sure that you folks are familiar with Jordan's principle. I know that in other jurisdictions in Canada – for example, in Manitoba – you know, the provincial government will do whatever is necessary to ensure that every child is looked after and then sort out dollars and everything else later on. We don't have that here in Alberta. I understand that it's not necessarily your mandate, but is that something that the ministry has either explored or talked about or would look to in the future?

Mr. Werry: I'll ask Cameron Henry to speak to that.

Mr. Henry: There have been discussions internally and with First Nations regarding Jordan's principle. There is a lot of confusion as to what exactly Jordan's principle is. People have tried to sort of ever-expand the potential definition of Jordan's principle. From the Alberta government's point of view, we look at it within the context in which it initially arose, which was complex medical needs.

Correspondence was provided back to treaty organizations a couple of years ago that indicated that Alberta does take a child-first approach. A case management process has been established to deal with situations where there are complex medical needs. The government has not endorsed Jordan's principle per se, but there is a process in place to deal with those situations should they arise.

Mr. Bilous: Thanks.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Two minutes.

Mr. Bilous: All right. An MLA Committee on the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Workforce Planning Initiative was formed by ministers of employment and immigration and Aboriginal Relations. Like the MOU, the aboriginal workforce strategy that this committee was supposed to develop has yet to be fully developed and implemented. Have the reports and recommendations of the committee tasked with creating the aboriginal workforce strategy and those of the groups working under the MOU been studied or considered together to improve efficiencies and information sharing?

Mr. Werry: Information sharing relative to workforce?

Mr. Bilous: Yeah. Relative to the workforce strategy and, again, developing it and then implementing it.

Mr. Werry: That work is under way at this point.

Mr. Bilous: All right. Jumping to First Nations unemployment rates, as you've said, they are more than three times that of Albertans in general and have increased approximately 5 per cent between 2011 and 2012. Well, I'll back up. What long-term strategies and planning will the ministry implement to continue funding projects aimed at lowering aboriginal unemployment without having to apply for unpredictable, unstable grant funds?

Mr. Werry: Well, we do work closely, again, with other departments on the issues related to aboriginal employment. I know there are a number of proposals out there right now that are designed to try and assist in identifying aboriginal people and connecting them to the workforce opportunities. We do know there's lots of conversation about the potential workforce that aboriginal people represent. But if you actually look at the demographic bubble, the most significant portion of that aboriginal workforce is actually five years away from the workforce. If you

actually look at where the ages are right now, that's where they are. But we are working with others on that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

All right. We'll turn over the remainder of our time, roughly 18 minutes, to Mr. Dorward and his caucus.

Mr. Dorward: Ms Pastoor, did you have a question?

Ms Pastoor: Yes, I did. Thank you. My previous colleague sort of asked my question as well, but I'd like to repeat it because I think the answer is really important. Exactly what is the percentage of the FNMI population that is employed, and at what level are they employed in your ministry and in the other ministries that you work with and partner with? I think it's very important, just from my own personal experience, that First Nations working with First Nations seems to move things along a little quicker perhaps. So, to me, those numbers are important.

Just an aside and a tangent that I often go off on is how proud we were as a people in Lethbridge that we had our First Nations run for council, a young man, a third-year science student from the university, who came off with a very good showing. We elected eight, and I believe he was number 10. I will be working with him, and hopefully next time we will have a First Nation on our council. I believe that we need more at those kinds of tables. So thank you.

9:40

I think that's all I had other than that one of the things I've noticed as well is that I think the apprenticeship program for not only just First Nations but perhaps particularly for First Nations has to be strengthened because that's partly where not just First Nations but everyone falls through the cracks. Apprenticeships are hard to get. Apprenticeships are hard to maintain. I think that we really need to take a look at that, particularly in training our First Nations. We're very proud of both, you know, Lethbridge College and our University of Lethbridge, that produce highly educated First Nations. Sometimes, particularly from the college, they want trades, and it's difficult to get that apprenticeship.

Those are just my comments, really, more than questions. Thank you.

Mr. Werry: Thank you.

Mr. Dorward: MLA Jeneroux, did you have a question?

Mr. Jeneroux: Yeah. A quick one here.

Mr. Dorward: It's good that it's quick.

Mr. Jeneroux: I guess I was trying to sort this out around the high-speed Internet, that has just recently come to two Métis reserves, Dene Tha' and Tallcree. That's two of eight, then, that have that. Do the other settlements already have high-speed Internet? Before you answer that question, my understanding is that 75 per cent of the infrastructure for Internet towers and fibre-optic cables and wireless equipment can all be covered by a grant but that this program currently sits within the agriculture department. So perhaps you can't answer this. I see it as highly important that these Métis settlements are – I'm surprised there's not high-speed Internet there. If there's opportunity through funding or grants within your department, is there, I guess, any thought given on your side?

Mr. Werry: First of all, all eight settlements do have high-speed Internet. The two communities you mentioned are both First Nations communities.

Mr. Jeneroux: Oh, sorry. My mistake.

Mr. Werry: Dene Tha' and Tallcree are in northwestern Alberta. The settlements do have high-speed Internet.

Mr. Jeneroux: Oh, there you go. Quick question and answer. Thank you.

Mr. Dorward: All right. MLA Fenske, did you have a follow-up, too? We kind of cut you off at the end of the last one.

Ms Fenske: Well, I was just following up on the human resources and the children in care, and perhaps that will come through in some of the responses that you're giving to the Leader of the Official Opposition. But is there some kind of financial statement to show what's being done from your department and from Human Services to be able to deal with those children?

Mr. Werry: The bulk of that would obviously be in Human Services expenditures. We're happy to identify those kinds of initiatives that we support that contribute to that. As I mentioned earlier, some of the First Nation development fund projects do go towards those types of initiatives, and we can certainly make that information available.

Ms Fenske: Okay. I would think that someone in your department would know what Human Services is doing because you're the department that's doing the collaboration. It would be great to get a handle on that.

Just on that, if I might add that when you were referring to the First Nations development fund, you said that there are some excellent examples. Are those identified anywhere as far as what they're doing? Is that perhaps coming out in that report that you're bringing forward in a couple of weeks?

Mr. Werry: I'm just going to ask Peter Crossen, the director of FNDF, to speak to your specific question.

Mr. Crossen: Yes. Aside from the FNDF standing report, which we release every year, every payment that we make to First Nations is on the Internet under albertalotteryfund.ca, so all of them are available on there for public viewing.

Ms Fenske: Thank you.

Mr. Dorward: Okay. Thank you.

I did want to maybe make a little bit of a comment, and then I do have some questions. We're going to run out of time before I ever get to all my questions. The comment is that your ministry is a new one that was pulled out of another one under the leadership of Premier Redford, to put this emphasis on that here. Definitely, you're new and probably finding your way, but there's been a flavour here in the room, I think, in the examinations. First, I started off, and then the MLA for Highwood, the Leader of the Official Opposition, actually continued that discussion. I'd like to say it again, and that is: where does the ministry fit in terms of reporting and taking leadership and even ownership, if I could use that word, of the tremendous opportunity we have in Alberta with respect to aboriginal individuals? Alberta could lead the world in this area in terms of the strength. We have the opportunity; we have the need, absolutely, in our province economically and socially.

There was a list given to us of challenges in regard to trying to find out the numbers and to try to find out the goals. We understand this ministry set-up and its advocacy and its relationships. Those are good words. Now I'm going to change a little bit and say that there's also been a flavour that I felt that the annual report doesn't yet – and I'll use that word "yet" intentionally – reflect the movement towards the objectives that could be out there, things that could be found to be measured. The performance measures have got to be stated well for people and then measured. That's really soft in the annual report right now. I see outperforming on performance goals that have been the same for three or four years. It kind of says: they're probably not paying a whole lot of attention to that kind of area.

As well, if I was to make comment about your financial statements, I think they're very broad in nature. I've heard that there's another report coming, and I understand the timing issues of that. I have done lots of audits of these kinds of things, and I understand the challenges with respect to creating financial statements for project-based kinds of things and then having the process of audit go through and all the rest. So there is definitely a timing issue. I saw some information on the website.

I would like to see a situation where an annual report has, really, three components to it. It's got something friendly at the front, where it describes what the heck you do, so that Albertans could get to take this annual report and actually have a section where it's very fun and friendly. The corporate world has done a good job of that.

The second part is those performance measures and a healthy and hearty review of those. I don't know that it's impossible for you to be an advocate on behalf of First Nations individuals, Métis individuals, and Inuit individuals in terms of extracting from those various departments those kinds of statistics and putting them in here.

Finally, the boring financial part. Yours is very general. I can't find in here where money was spent on various gatherings and getting together. There's a broad \$14 million for this and \$6 million for that, but it doesn't help me to really drill down to those kinds of program-level type things.

Just to reiterate, then – and with the Auditor General in our meeting this morning we were discussing this a little bit – I may have some more comments in the future on who is truly gathering these bits of information from the other ministries and getting them in one place and then working on this tremendous potential that we have.

Any comments in this little area, Mr. Werry?

Mr. Werry: Well, as I indicated earlier, we are working on a sharp clarification of the role of the ministry. I think that's really fundamental to addressing the issues you're raising. I think we all would agree that performance measures are an area where more clarity and more work can be done, and we're interested in doing that work.

Mr. Dorward: Now in more detail if I have a couple of minutes. The chair will cut me off when I need to be cut off. On page 19 of the annual report it talks about aboriginal women's initiatives. I just wanted to give you the opportunity to tell us what's happening in that area. There's money spent on page 19 that describes \$545,000 in funding for 14 projects. It goes through some of them. Is that enough? Personally, I think that's not a lot of money in terms of the need in this area.

9:50

Mr. Werry: In terms of aboriginal women's initiatives we did spend \$295,000 in '12-13 to fund projects aimed at aboriginal women in the areas of economic development and entrepreneurship. We also collaborated with other ministries to support aboriginal women's initiatives, and we worked together with other ministries on supporting training for unemployed and underemployed aboriginal women. Right now Aboriginal Relations and Human Services are co-leading development of a provincial strategy to improve the socioeconomic outcomes for aboriginal women in Alberta. I introduced Tracy Balash earlier, who will be working on that on behalf of both ministries. So we are moving strongly into this area.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you.

Mrs. Sarich, you had a follow-up question to your previous questions.

Mrs. Sarich: It's not to a previous question. It goes back to some questions at the top end of our meeting here today. I'd like to explore this one particular area. There are a lot of dollars spent by your department in assisting, and I think I heard the comment that it was self-identified projects by the aboriginal communities and that then you would make a determination on what to support or not. There's a little bit of difficulty in continuity, I'd just like to point out, in terms of what those terms of reference are for applying for grants and things like that. If you could take a look at that particular area. Maybe there is some streamlining to help account for the dollars or the applicants as well.

I just find it very ironic that with all that type of activity the unemployment statistics stemming from 2009 really haven't changed that much. It's still problematic. I was wondering if you had any insight that would be of value to share on this particular issue of unemployment rates for the aboriginal population, based on all the dollars being invested to help them and to strengthen what they have, and, you know, for the activities of your department and for this particular population.

Mr. Werry: I just want to clarify one thing. First of all, the employment rate for aboriginal people in the last year has actually gone up in Alberta, so there has been improvement in the employment situation. The labour force participation rate, which is a statistic we also look at, for Métis people, for example, is actually higher than the labour force participation rate for non-aboriginal people in Alberta. There are some positive numbers within the numbers. However, if you break the numbers down – and we really have trouble with the elusive on-reserve numbers or on-settlement numbers – anecdotally those numbers are bad. We understand that.

Part of the challenge of that – and I don't want to treat this matter except as a very important matter – is that in most of those communities, the First Nation reserve communities and the settlement communities, their economies have almost 100 per cent leakage. If you think about that, all the money that comes into that community actually goes out of that community. They don't necessarily have a set of businesses within their community.

So one of the conversations we're having with First Nations now is: what does a nation-sustaining economy look like? What does it look like within First Nations when they actually have businesses where money that comes into that community can stay in that community and recirculate in that community? That's going to have an impact on employment.

We do have a couple of First Nations in the province right now that have virtually full employment. With the nation I mentioned

earlier, the Loon River First Nation, which has no children in care, when I've spoken to Chief Noskey, he has told me that anyone in his community who wants to work can work. That First Nation has built a series of businesses that operate within the community they're in. Ultimately, the long-term solution is more of those types of examples, more of those types of opportunities, and that's not quick work. That's work that takes time, and it takes commitment on the part of the First Nations themselves as well.

Mr. Dorward: I just want to throw one on the table. Can I throw one in?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Dorward: Mayor Iveson would get mad at me if I did not put this question on the table and ask you to provide a written response. As well as working with all those government ministries in GOA, there's obviously a desire on behalf of the city of Edmonton and particularly the city of Calgary, the city of Lethbridge, the city of Red Deer, and others to build into their work and their desires urban aboriginal peoples. If you could just provide me a paragraph back to the committee maybe on how you interact with or will be interacting with them on those kinds of initiatives as well. Again, it's the same people. They're all Albertans, and we all care about them. But we want to make sure that we're efficient with respect to that, not duplicating things, and supporting each other and strengthening each other rather than working in different directions. If you could provide me something on that.

Mr. Werry: Yeah.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Okay. If there are no other questions, we'll move on to other business. I do want to thank again our guests for coming today and answering our questions. We really appreciate it very much. If there are any outstanding questions that you couldn't get to or you'd like to expand on, by all means please write the committee and give us those answers. That would be appreciated.

Before we wrap up this morning, we do still have one more slot left during the fall sitting. Alberta Health and AHS have requested to be pushed back from November 27 to December 4, which I think we should allow for, so we currently have November 27 vacant. We talked this morning as an informal working group with the Auditor General, and the Auditor General suggested that it might be a good idea to invite Energy to come and see us on that date regarding the report that's about to come out and then also perhaps Agriculture on a date subsequent. So what was suggested is that we invite Alberta Energy to come see us on November 27, and then obviously we'll have Alberta Health on December 4, and then we'll schedule Alberta Agriculture for December 11 if we're still in session, but if we're not in session, we'll push that back to the first meeting for spring.

We need a motion that

Alberta Energy be invited before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on November 27, 2013, and that should session continue past the current expected end date of December 5, 2013, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development be invited on December 11, 2013, and that any necessary scheduling changes be made at the discretion of the informal working group.

Mr. Khan: Those in favour? Any opposed? Carried.

I'd like to note that LAO research has prepared documents in response to the September 12 research requests on Public Accounts Committee – I can never say this right – nomenclature.

Mr. Dorward: Nomenclature.

The Chair: Nomenclature. That's right. Sorry.

Mr. Dorward: Why would you pick a word that you didn't like?

The Chair: Well, who says I picked that word?

Dr. Massolin: It's our fault.

The Chair: Exactly, research. Way to go.

Mr. Dorward: Change it on the fly.

The Chair: The research request on PAC stuff: how about that?

Dr. Massolin: Terminology.

The Chair: Terminology. There we go.

Also, I'd like to note for the record that we have received written responses to follow-up questions put on record by committee members back in the spring from Energy, Alberta Health Services, Agriculture and Rural Development as well as Enterprise and Advanced Education. So those are all on the website.

Is there any other business committee members would like to raise at this time? Mrs. Sarich.

Mrs. Sarich: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was wondering – and I know the minutes are ticking here, and we're very close to our adjournment – if we could spend some time on the information received on the nomenclature and the implementation plans. I'd just like to have the opportunity to explore the information provided to our committee. We need to dedicate a little bit of time, and today is not a good day because it's almost 10 o'clock.

The Chair: Sure. Let's discuss that, a meeting, obviously – maybe a separate meeting or half of a meeting or maybe an extra half an hour or hour on top of a meeting, whatever – to find some time to do that. Is that what you mean?

Mrs. Sarich: Yeah. Some portion of time. I don't see that it would take a lot of time, you know, maybe 15 minutes or 10 minutes. We've asked them to provide written information to the Public Accounts Committee, the information has been received, and to close on these particular pieces, I believe you have to have a discussion if there are any questions or clarification or thoughts.

10:00

The Chair: All right. Could we leave it to the informal working group to find a half-hour time, probably at the beginning or end of one of the meetings in this session, to do that? Would that be all right? I don't know if we need a motion for that.

Mr. Dorward: Well, why don't we do that little discussion right now. I'm certainly in favour, personally, of adding half an hour to either next week or a week after. Everybody could plan for that and stay till 10:30 for a discussion about what our committee is about subsequent to receiving these materials. How does everybody else feel about spending a half-hour then?

The Chair: A half-hour would be great, but I would ask that it be on the front end, not the back end, so 8 o'clock to 8:30.

Mr. Dorward: But, then, when do we do our little update?

The Chair: Well, we move the briefing up. As opposition we can't do 10 o'clock.

Mr. Dorward: So we move briefing to 7:30? I mean, you won't get a complaint from me. I'm up and around.

The Chair: For next week we'll do the briefing at 7:30 and the meeting at 8 o'clock. For the first half-hour we'll discuss that issue, and then we'll go into the regular.

Mrs. Sarich: Yeah. Maybe at that time, the 7:30 for next week – we have one of the largest departments scheduled to come forward to the Public Accounts Committee, being Alberta Health and AHS, Alberta Health Services. Perhaps the discussion will be very weighty, there's lots of information provided by the Auditor General, and I'm looking for your direction on how to explore this. I'm just wondering: perhaps the Public Accounts Committee should also think about coming together in advance of that to have more time dedicated with the Auditor General, with his reports in preparation for receiving the meeting with those two groups. So it would be another scheduling . . .

Mr. Dorward: About 6:30?

Mrs. Sarich: No. You know, something within reason.

I'm looking for your direction. Maybe it can be sorted out with the deputy chair. It's very important.

The Chair: Sure. I agree. Let's sort that out. We do need to wrap up this meeting, but let's talk about that, Mr. Deputy Chair.

The date of the next meeting will be next Wednesday, November 6, 2013, with Treasury Board and Finance. We'll start at 8 o'clock. Our meetings will continue every Wednesday morning during session in the same time slot with the exception of two weeks from now, on November 13, due to constituency week. As a reminder, the prebriefing meetings will continue to be offered by LAO research services and the office of the Auditor General in committee room B from 8 to 8:30 a.m. although next week, of course, it will be 7:30.

Would a member like to move adjournment? Ms Pastoor. Those in favour? Any opposed? Carried.

Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 10:03 a.m.]

