



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Standing Committee
on
Resource Stewardship

Ministry of Indigenous Relations
Consideration of Main Estimates

Tuesday, April 3, 2018
3:30 p.m.

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Fourth Session**

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Ministry of Indigenous Relations
Hon. Richard Feehan, Minister
Donavon Young, Deputy Minister

3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 3, 2018

[Loyola in the chair]

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

The Chair: I'd like to call the meeting to order and welcome everyone. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019.

I'd ask that we go around the table and have all MLAs introduce themselves for the record. Minister, please introduce the officials that are joining you at the table. I'm Rod Loyola, the MLA for Edmonton-Ellerslie and chair of this committee. We'll start here to my right.

Mr. Drysdale: Wayne Drysdale, MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Hanson: Dave Hanson, MLA, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, and my assistant, Alissa Zinovieva.

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

Ms McPherson: Karen McPherson, MLA, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, and this is Ben Li, my assistant.

Mr. Feehan: I'm Richard Feehan, the Minister of Indigenous Relations, and I have with me here on my left Donavon Young, who's the deputy minister. Beside him is Clay Buchanan – sorry; they're written in a different order here, Clay. I was almost going to call you something else. Clay Buchanan is the ADM of First Nations and Métis relations, and on my right is Olena Urban, director of financial services.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Dang: Thomas Dang, MLA for Edmonton-South West.

Ms Babcock: Good afternoon. Erin Babcock, MLA, Stony Plain.

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

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

The Chair: I'd like to note the following substitution. That's Dr. Turner for Mr. Kleinstauber.

Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, and the committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. 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, including the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.01(6), the rotation is as follows. The minister or the member of Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes. For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes members of the third party, if any, and the minister may speak, and for the next 20 minutes members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent members and the minister may speak.

For the next 20 minutes private members of the government caucus and the minister may speak. For the time remaining, we will follow the same rotation just outlined to the extent possible. However, the speaking times are reduced to five minutes, as set out in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

Members wishing to participate must be present during the appropriate portion of the meeting. Members may speak more than once. However, speaking times for the first rotation are limited to 10 minutes at any one time. A minister and a member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. For the rotation that follows, with speaking times of up to five minutes, a minister and a member may combine their speaking times for a total of 10 minutes. Discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not the speaking time is combined. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their rotation if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time. If members have any questions regarding speaking times or the rotations, please feel free to send a note or speak directly with either the chair or the committee clerk about the process.

A total of three hours has been scheduled to consider the estimates for the Ministry of Indigenous Relations. With the concurrence of the committee I will call a five-minute break near the midpoint of the meeting. However, the three-hour clock will continue to run. Does anyone oppose having this break? Okay.

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

Ministry officials may be present and at the direction of the minister may address the committee. Ministry officials seated in the gallery, if called upon, have access to a microphone in the gallery area. Ministry officials are reminded to introduce themselves prior to responding to a question or questions. Pages are available to deliver notes or other materials between the gallery and the table. Attendees in the gallery should not approach the table. Members' staff may be present and seated along the committee room wall. Space permitting, opposition caucus staff may sit at the table to assist their members. However, members have priority to sit at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to three hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and the committee will adjourn. The scheduled end time of today's meeting is 6:30 p.m.

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 is deferred until consideration of all ministry estimates has concluded and will occur in Committee of Supply on April 19, 2018. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are to be moved. The original amendment is to be deposited with the committee clerk, and 20 copies of the amendment must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm very pleased, of course, to be here on Treaty 6 territory with all of you and, of course, I acknowledge the Métis people and their strong connection to this land.

First of all, I'd like to introduce members of our department's senior management team that are here with me today. We have Donavon Young, deputy minister; John Donner, who's the ADM for indigenous climate leadership and corporate services; Stan Rutwind, who's the ADM of consultation and land claims; Clay

Buchanan, who's the ADM of First Nations and Métis relations; Kristina Midbo, director of indigenous women's initiatives; Olena Urban, director of financial services; and Jessica Johnson, director of communications.

I am pleased to be here to present the Indigenous Relations spending estimates for 2018 and 2019.

As government we are focused on a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples living in Alberta, one that is based on reconciliation, mutual respect, and co-operation. Since becoming Minister of Indigenous Relations, it's been my privilege to meet with all eight Métis settlements in this province, the First Nations and Métis women's councils on economic security, and to visit 46 of the 48 First Nations to meet with leaders in their communities and to understand their priorities. We view our work through the lens of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. We seek to recognize indigenous peoples, their voices, and their wisdom. My ministry provides input and advice to other ministries on programs, services, policies, and issues to help them do the same. This crossministry work helps ensure that our government recognizes indigenous communities and their priorities so that together we can work with indigenous leaders to build respectful relationships. Together we can close gaps and work to ensure that indigenous peoples have opportunities to participate fully in all aspects of Alberta's society and economy. To that end, we are focused on five priorities.

First, we are working with First Nations, the federal government, municipal water commissions, and Alberta's Ministry of Transportation to provide reliable access to clean and safe drinking water. To be clear, water on-reserve is the federal government's responsibility, but our government is committed to supporting that responsibility by working with our partners to bring water infrastructure to reserve boundaries. Alberta Transportation holds the budget for this; however, Indigenous Relations plays a vital role in fostering collaboration between government, municipal water commissions, and the First Nations communities involved. Currently we are exploring potential projects of this nature.

Our second priority is our relationship agreements. Two years ago we signed a protocol agreement with the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta. This year we will develop an annual report of progress on this protocol agreement that reflects the work of the protocol tables where ministers, chiefs, and senior officials identified and discussed areas of mutual concern. Last year we signed a protocol agreement with the Blackfoot Confederacy. Through this agreement we are also moving to implement table discussion meetings which will identify specific action items. These agreements are building and strengthening our relationships and are an important step toward establishing true government-to-government relationships with First Nations. As I just alluded to, from these agreements we established tables for cabinet ministers and Alberta chiefs to meet on a government-to-government level. At these tables they address issues of mutual concern, including the economy, employment, health, education, culture, and language.

We have also committed to building our relationships with the Metis Settlements General Council and the Métis Nation of Alberta. I am proud to note that Alberta is the only province that has a land base for Métis, the settlements. We are also strengthening our relationship with the Métis Nation of Alberta through the 10-year agreement that we signed just last year.

3:40

Our third priority is renewing our consultation policies. Alberta has a duty and a responsibility to consult with First Nations and Métis settlements when Crown decisions relating to land and

natural resource management have the potential to adversely impact treaty rights and traditional uses or harvesting practices.

Right now we are engaging indigenous communities along with industry, municipalities, and government ministries to find out how we can make our consultation policies more effective for all parties. A renewed First Nations consultation policy and a Métis settlements consultation policy will ensure clarity, consistency, and respect in consultation on land-use decisions. We are also in the process of developing a Métis consultation policy. This policy will make sure Métis not living on settlements have a voice in the land and resource management decisions that affect them.

Another important priority is developing economic opportunities for indigenous communities and encouraging the development of indigenous-owned businesses. We are currently delivering several programs that support indigenous business start-ups and expansions. Through the aboriginal business investment fund and the economic partnership program we are working to increase indigenous participation in a number of sectors, including tourism, construction, and telecommunications. This is also helping communities and families support themselves and take advantage of Alberta's improving economy.

Economic development is also supported by our fifth priority, to continue taking action on reducing greenhouse gas emissions through the indigenous climate leadership programs. These programs will help indigenous communities reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce their energy costs, and create jobs. In addition to offering seven indigenous climate leadership programs, which have seen enthusiastic uptake by indigenous communities, we are continuing to work with indigenous leadership and partners to develop a joint decision-making structure. This will allow representatives of indigenous communities jointly with government to decide how to offer climate services, programs, and supports to indigenous communities and peoples. A joint decision-making structure will help leaders in indigenous communities participate in economic, social, and environmental opportunities, especially renewable electricity development. As you will see, these priorities are reflected in our budget.

Now let us talk about numbers. The department's total budget for 2018-19 is \$243.5 million. This is an increase of \$51.3 million from last year. Much of this increase is dedicated to the climate leadership plan. This coming fiscal year \$53.9 million is allocated for the seven indigenous climate leadership programs and for other expenses related to a joint governance structure. Government budgeted a total of \$100 million to support the First Nations drinking water initiative. As I mentioned earlier, while the funding rests with Transportation, which will have the lead on project construction, Indigenous Relations will work to develop the partnerships required to support the projects under the initiative.

I am proud to say that the majority of our budget is grant funding. In fact, a full 86 per cent of our budget is allocated to grants. This includes the \$121.2 million allocated for the First Nations development fund. This is revenue from casinos on First Nations that is then used for First Nations social, economic, and community development. Government earmarked \$10 million as part of the long-term arrangement funding, which includes \$2 million to address infrastructure projects and \$1 million to address Métis settlement housing, \$1 million for Métis settlement consultation capacity to help the settlements participate more fully in the consultation process, and \$6 million for essential services, education, training, and safe communities.

Eight million of our budget is set aside for the potential administration and implementation of land entitlement claims; \$4.3 million is allocated for economic opportunities and indigenous community support; \$1.4 million is for funding the protocol

agreements, which I talked about earlier. There is \$1.2 million for the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association and the urban initiatives program to deliver programs, services, and referrals for indigenous peoples in urban areas. We will use \$6.5 million to ensure that First Nations have the resources they need to participate more fully in the consultation process; \$1.8 million is allocated to the Métis Nation of Alberta to support their capacity in the framework agreement and the tripartite agreement. Five million is allocated for the aboriginal business investment fund, which provides funding to increase the number of indigenous community-owned businesses, increase employment opportunities for indigenous people, create or increase local revenue streams for indigenous communities, and strengthen the economies of indigenous communities, and \$2.2 million is allocated for the employment partnership program from the labour market transfer agreements.

Our budget focuses on ensuring that indigenous peoples in Alberta are able to participate more fully in our economy and society, and it's essential that they have a voice.

I'd be happy to answer any questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. Would the members like me to set 20-minute intervals just as a reminder?

Mr. Hanson: If you could, just as a reminder, that would be great. Thank you.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you. Please go ahead, Mr. Hanson.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Chair, Mr. Loyola as well as Minister Feehan and the Ministry of Indigenous Relations staff that are here today and all the staff of the ministry for all the excellent, hard work that you do. I know that it's not always easy.

I hope you understand, Minister. We had a little chit-chat beforehand, but this is budget estimates, and I am opposition, so don't be offended by any of my questions if they do hit a little low.

I'd just like to add, you know, that our province has faced and triumphed over countless adversities in the last few years, including floods and fires from one end of the province to the other. One of the things that always stands out is the indigenous communities and how they react and help out each other. I know that during the Fort McMurray fire the Kikino Métis settlement and Buffalo Lake were all very instrumental in helping folks out there. It is incredible how they face tragedy and pull people together from all sides.

We want to ensure that we are supporting in the very best way the indigenous communities of Alberta. I've been very proud to be the shadow minister of this for going on three years now. That's why we're here today. We're here to listen and collaborate with you, wherever possible, to make things better but also to ensure that the ministry is held to account on behalf of indigenous communities all across Alberta, including the Métis settlements as well.

I'd just like to point out that when I look at the bottom line item total of \$243,478,000, I like to compare things to the debt servicing. Basically, this year our debt servicing is going to be eight times the entire amount that we're spending on Indigenous Relations. I'd just like to let that sink home: eight times our entire Indigenous Relations budget going into debt servicing.

The first thing I'd like to hit on in the business plan is the clean drinking water initiatives. As was mentioned in the business plan, outcome 1, key strategy 1.1, the ministry intends to ensure access to clean, safe, and reliable drinking water. Last year your update

stated that you were working with the federal government to introduce a seamless process. I was wondering if you could give us just a brief update.

If I may go back and forth.

The Chair: Yeah, please.

Mr. Hanson: Sorry. I forgot to do that. So we'll go back and forth if we could.

If you can just give us an update on how that's going, your collaboration with the federal government on clean drinking water.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, MLA Hanson. I appreciate this question because it's one of our priorities, and I think you know that we've been working very hard with communities, including communities in your constituency, to ensure that the clean drinking water that we expect to have in our homes in any town or city is equally available to members of the community.

I take note that you commented that our budget is such that the amount of money spent on interest in the next little while is higher than the amount of money here. You know, I obviously need to point out the fact that we would not be able to provide \$100 million to First Nations, who truly deserve to have clean water, unless we budgeted for that, and that required us under the present circumstances to do some deficit budgeting. I'm quite proud to stand up for that and stand up for clean drinking water in this province when I know that some opposition members would prefer that we not do so in order to save money.

In answer to your question, I'd like to say that it's been a very good, constructive process in which we've been working closely both with the federal government and First Nations to make sure that there weren't jurisdictional problems that interfered with the ability to move ahead on these initiatives. You may know that in the last year we already got started on actual builds in a couple of communities. The Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation has had their build started, and the Paul band/First Nation's I think is completed at this point or very close to being completed at this particular time. One of the things I want to mention about that is that both, of course, will be enjoying clean, safe drinking water now.

3:50

We also worked very closely with the federal government because, as you know, we don't build on-reserve in the province. We went to the federal government and said to them: "We are not asking permission. We are not even asking for co-operation. We are simply going to go ahead and do this. There will be a pipe that sits on the edge of the reserve, and we expect you to do the right thing." When we provided that leadership and when we ensured that the government knew what was going on so that they were not surprised, we were rewarded with extreme levels of co-operation with the federal government. As a result, I was with Minister Bennett on Alexis reserve last year, where they announced the money that they would be adding to our money and would be making sure that water is put on the reserve.

I also want to note that this has had added benefits in that many of the towns between Stony Plain and the reserve have also now been connected, so, you know, if you live on Lac Ste. Anne, you're getting connected. I know that you know that in your own area we are working very closely with Whitefish (Goodfish), and that has allowed Mallaig to get water as well.

Mr. Hanson: That ties into my next question, yeah. Actually, Whitefish Lake was a secondary sideline to the planned Mallaig

water route, right? That was one that was added on because we needed that interbasin transfer.

Getting back to that . . .

Mr. Feehan: I'm sorry. You did the interbasin transfer?

Mr. Hanson: No, no. When we applied for the interbasin transfer, originally it was to connect to Mallaig, and it was decided to take in Whitefish Lake, which made perfect sense.

But while we're talking about that waterline, I've got a request from Kikino Métis settlement. From highway 28 to Kikino is, I want to say, about 54 kilometres, but from where the line ties in at Whitefish Lake, it's only about 10. Something I'll be pestering you about maybe at a later date is possibly tying on to that.

Mr. Feehan: I appreciate that. I can just let you know, by the way, that we did have the Métis settlements all meeting with the ministers of Infrastructure and Transportation, and at that meeting the Minister of Transportation made a commitment to look at exactly that particular proposal and to consider where that might fit into our present budgeting. I'm very hopeful that we'll be able to work some of that out.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. It's one that makes sense because they're looking at upgrading their water system anyway, and it probably would be a wash as far as finances go.

That being considered as well, I'm sure that you remember the situation at Saddle Lake last spring, with road conditions where we couldn't get water delivery. They're all on the cistern system. They've got a good water treatment facility there. I realize that this isn't provincial jurisdiction, those roads, but again when we're talking about good, clean drinking water and you can't drive down the roads to deliver water to the houses and the kids can't go to school, it becomes a bit of an issue. Anyway, we'll leave that for now.

The \$100 million initiative that you're talking about: does that fall under another department, or is there a line item in here that I'm missing?

Mr. Feehan: What you will find is that the \$100 million itself falls under the Transportation department because they do the administering of the contracts. It's within their purview. But you will find that there is money in our budget to facilitate the work that we do to bring the nations to the table, to make sure that they're connected to the ministries that are necessary, and to ensure that we're also working with the federal government, which we have been in the past, to make sure that when a line is connected to a reserve, it is indeed connected to the community in an appropriate way.

Mr. Hanson: You bet. Okay. Thank you.

Let's go to the flood recovery at Siksika. That seems to be ongoing. We're now going on five years from 2013, when the floods happened. I see that in the performance measures as the last actual we're only showing 7 per cent in 2016-17, and we have a very ambitious target of 100 per cent by 2018-19. Can you let us know where we're at, where we stand today, how many houses are completed, and how many repairs and new houses are yet to be done?

Mr. Feehan: Right. Thank you. It's an excellent question. Of course, it has been, as you say, quite a number of years since the actual floods occurred. We've been very concerned about people who have been living in what may be viewed as temporary shelters. You know, they're trailers. They're not awful places, but they're just not homes, like one would like to have.

Now, there were some problems with that particular situation that arose. At the time, when the previous government was in, they had made promises to the community that they would be able to pick and choose anywhere they wanted to rebuild except for in the flood zone, that they would be able to go anywhere into the bush and they would be connected and built. Now, of course, what happened is that the band council looked at the monies that were available and realized that having widespread homes was not a good use of dollars.

Unfortunately, the previous government had made a promise that was not a good promise, and the result was that there was conflict in the community. The chief and council made a decision to actually create communities, neighbourhoods, and, you know, streets and avenues and lights and so on and then build all the houses together, which was objected to by a number of the people in the community. As a result, there were some protests, and the work that was originally planned was stopped for a period of time. An information teepee had been set up. People were stopped going in and out of the zone. Subsequently everything got delayed while it was reviewed. However, that has been resolved. The management of the building of those homes was taken under the control of the Siksika Nation, and as a result we could, you know, only provide supports and so on.

There were 138 houses that were flood impacted, that needed to be relocated, and that left about 125 families that were without homes over the last year. We're happy to say that we've been working very closely with the Siksika band council, and as a result we are quite confident that those houses will be built this year. There are 88 houses that are presently under construction, five houses that will be repaired, and 16 houses that will begin construction in April. There are also 13 houses that have been completed, that families have already moved into, and 16 houses awaiting final inspection. We are quite confident that we will be hitting the 100 per cent completion rate by the fall of this year. You'll notice in our budget that the amount of money budgeted for next year completely drops off to zero because we will be completed.

If something surprises us, we have the ability to move some dollars forward – we have done that in the past – but we don't expect that that will happen because the houses are in fact being built. We can clearly see that they are, and there's no longer a conflict within the community that's delaying the build.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. During that conflict was the money allotted frozen, or was there some money that was lost because of the delays?

Mr. Feehan: No. No money was lost. We had the ability to retain the dollars in our budget until such time as the build was actually going to occur. We had a contract with Siksika, who are the actual managers of the project. They just held on to the dollars until they were able to spend them. We held on to some of the dollars until we were able to move it forward, and we have now, of course, because the building is occurring now.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. So are we going back to a neighbourhood model – is that the plan? – or is there kind of a mix of neighbourhood models?

Mr. Feehan: The vast majority of it remains as a neighbourhood model now. You know, the flood plain is down in a valley. You may have been there. If you've ever been to Blackfoot Crossing,

you can look out over the valley. They have decided to build up on top of the hill, which was the objection. The community had been living down in the valley for perhaps thousands of years, and many of them did not want to move up. But they resolved that issue, and now they have what's essentially a townsite on top of the hill.

4:00

Mr. Hanson: Okay. We'll go on to the climate leadership plan. I've a couple of questions there. Again, I understand where the money is earmarked for green infrastructure projects, but I just have to go back to the road conditions, right? Is there some way that we could put some of that or even some money out of the First Nations development fund into improving some of the road conditions? Because I know that the federal funding doesn't go far enough in maintaining some of these roads. Is that something that is a possibility on the horizon?

Mr. Feehan: Well, thank you. I think it's an excellent question. We'd love the federal government to step up. I mean, I think we would all agree on that. They just haven't in a consistent way. But it doesn't mean we haven't been working with the community on these things, including, in fact, a conversation with the Transportation minister about whether or not we can do anything about some of the roads. As you know, the east-west road is actually a provincial highway, so there have been some conversations about whether or not the north-south road could also be turned into a provincial highway. No decisions on that, but that's the kind of conversation that we're having.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. I think we talked about that last year in estimates as well.

Mr. Feehan: With regard to the climate leadership dollars, of course, we can't build roads with the climate leadership. It has to be something that reduces greenhouse gas emissions. That's the focus. All of our programs are focused on that as an end result. Of course, there are many other benefits along the way such as employment income and community development and even repair of houses with better windows and doors and so on.

However, the final piece that you mentioned was the FNDF money, the First Nations development fund. Now, in that case, any nation can apply for their allotted amount of money because that comes from the First Nations casinos. There's an allotted amount for each nation, and they choose what it is that they would like to do with that money. If, you know, Saddle Lake or any other nation said, "This year we're going to take a hundred per cent of our money or some portion of our money and we're going to put it toward improving the back roads or a gravel pit so that we can have gravel to put on the roads or anything else," we would welcome them to do that. We put very few restrictions on that money other than the fact that it really has to be working to develop the nation in some particular way.

Mr. Hanson: That's all done through grants, correct? So they have to apply to the First Nations development fund with a plan.

Mr. Feehan: That's right. But they're allotted money. They already know how much money they have available through that fund. It changes every year, of course, because it depends on gambling revenues. We know that this year coming up, as you'll notice in the budget, we anticipate it'll be lower and then rise up again next year. But they are well aware that they are available for monies. They have a good sense, generally, of how much money they do have available, so they can do some foreplanning and budgeting and then make the choices as to what happens each year. Largely, they do

exactly the type of thing you're talking about. Economic development, enhancement of the community services that are available, and roads have been included in many communities.

Mr. Hanson: How much oversight do we have? I know it's difficult sometimes on First Nations reserves.

Mr. Feehan: No. It's an excellent question. We have a very particular process of ensuring that when they put in an application for what they're going to be doing with those dollars that there are deliverables that are assigned to the contract of what they'll be doing and that there are times at which they are to report the success so far in terms of achieving those deliverables. Each of those is to be reported every year.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Let's see what else we've got. Moving on to the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, business plan outcome 1, key strategy 1.1, you mentioned implementing the principles of the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Last year you said that it would be a violation of the declaration itself for us to develop a set of specific activities we would engage in because we decided to do that and just push forward. In this case what progress have you made in the implementation of the UN declaration? How have you avoided the same roadblock, or will this initiative eventually just drop off the business plan for lack of progress? Have you made any progress?

Mr. Feehan: You know, the progress has been really great, to be honest. There are a number of initiatives that have been designed. If you remember, we did not want to get ahead of the communities in terms of what planning we did, so we took the United Nations declaration and gave it to every single ministry, but we also gave it to all of our community partners: treaties 6, 7, and 8, to the Métis Nation of Alberta, to the Metis Settlements General Council, to the friendship centres, to the institute for the advancement of indigenous women. I'm sure I'm forgetting somebody along the way. From that, we got a lot of ideas about how those monies should be spent, and we put together some initial priority items, approximately 20 of them overall at the beginning, with the understanding that we weren't trying to dictate anything.

Here are items that seemed to have some general support coming back from that initiative. In fact, the \$100 million for water, that we had been talking about earlier, was one of those initiatives. I can report right away that we've had major success on that one, as you know. We also have 16 of the 20 identified initiatives from that list already either completed or proceeding or will proceed with engagement in the next little while.

I'd be happy to run through some of those items so that you have some sense of that. I don't know how much detail you . . .

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. You know, if we could just get a list of those initiatives, if you could send that to us, that would be great, just which ones have been implemented.

Thank you.

The Chair: You can continue. You have 40 minutes left.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you.

Have you gotten any feedback from the First Nations communities and Métis settlements on some of these initiatives? How are they being received?

Mr. Feehan: Of course. Well, very well, I guess, is the simple answer. The reason why is because we didn't create them and then sell them to the communities. We asked the communities to feed

into us what kinds of things they'd change. Let me give you an example of one or two. You know, over the last little while, for example, we have been doing a rewrite of the curriculum for kindergarten to grade 12. The curriculum review was going ahead, but what we added as a result of this process was kind of a pillar to that rewrite, and that was the inclusion of First Nations' knowledge, history, traditions, and experiences in the curriculum. So now every student, whether they live on-reserve or off-reserve in the province of Alberta, will have an opportunity to learn about our history, about the treaties that were signed, about the culture of the people who lived here before the settlers came. As, of course, they get older, we'll start to challenge them with more important pieces such as issues around residential schools, issues around the '60s scoop, which you know a fair amount about.

Mr. Hanson: I guess that would have been my follow-up question to that. How much input have you gotten into designing these curriculum changes from First Nation communities as well?

Mr. Feehan: It's been fairly extensive, but I would actually direct you to the Minister of Education because I don't supervise that. I can tell you second-hand about much of the engagement with the communities. I can also tell you that, you know, I have spent a great deal of time speaking with nations around the province about these initiatives. We have the Treaty 8 protocol, where we have tables, where we have those discussions. We have the Blackfoot protocol tables as well where we have those discussions. As a result, we have a very extensive network of communication with the First Nations. In fact, it may be described as surprising, but it's so extensive that it's almost overwhelming to the communities how often they're asked to consult with us on various projects like these. We actually have to be a bit tempered in how we proceed because the amount of work that we can load onto some very small communities is, in some cases, very high and not something we wish to do. But we do wish to have them at the table.

You know, I'm proud to say as well that while I've met with all of the nations in various combinations, either as chief and council or as part of the chiefs' meeting or somewhere else, I've also personally travelled to 46 of the 48 nations, and, of course, have been to all eight of the settlements, where we have those intimate, one-to-one discussions just like we are now. So I'm fairly confident that the types of projects that we've created and we've brought to the communities are reflective of a real relationship with the communities and reflective of the demands that they have for the growth of their communities and their participation in the success of this province.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. I just want to jump back quickly to the climate leadership plan. We noticed that there are two line items. One, line 9, is \$20,327,000, and then under capital grants there's an additional \$33 million. What's the difference between the two?

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. Sorry; if you could just tell me which page.

Mr. Hanson: Page 174.

Mr. Feehan: Page 174. Okay. Thanks. If you can just walk me through your question, then I'll make sure I give you that.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. We have two identically labelled line items, 9, the Climate Leadership Plan, about two-thirds of the way down the page, and then right at the bottom of the page, under capital grants, you also have a line item called Climate Leadership Plan at \$33 million. What's the difference there, and why are they . . .

4:10

Mr. Feehan: Right. I understand. The difference, of course, is between capital grants and operating grants. The operating grants run the vast majority of the programs, but of course some of them are deemed to be capital. If you're putting solar panels up, solar panels are considered capital, not operating. That would be the largest example in that particular line item.

Mr. Hanson: Okay.

Mr. Feehan: It's actually been a very exciting year. You know, through these climate leadership programs there have been 124 applications that have been signed off on for First Nations and Métis communities. As a result, you will see solar panels by the end of this year on well over 30 First Nations, so we're very excited.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. I know that Montana was into solar panels and electrification before the initiatives were out there.

Mr. Feehan: They were, absolutely.

Mr. Hanson: Are they expanding their operation as well?

Mr. Feehan: They are. In fact, we have a lot to say thank you to Montana for. They were well ahead of the curve many years before we invented this climate leadership program, and we went to them and learned a lot from what they were doing. Subsequently, they've come back to us, and they've used the dollars from the climate leadership plan to expand. You know, initially they were on their public building, their big building. In fact, at the time, they told me that the solar panels on top of that building were saving them about \$2,000 a month in terms of electrical costs. It was their big building, their gymnasium and so on. Subsequently, they have used the climate leadership initiative not only to expand the number of public buildings they're on but also to support some of their green employment programs where they're training people to work in the field. They have a company there called Green Arrow. As you may know, it's been a very successful company. They like to say that they had some 24 spots and they trained 26 people in their training initiative. As a result, all of those people are out working in the field now.

You know, Alberta has put up more solar panels in the last year than in almost all the years prior to that combined.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. It's interesting. It is a very successful program, and I'd like to see a lot of our more northern communities that don't have access to the oil and gas industry, you know, get into something that . . .

Mr. Feehan: And many of them are. You can look forward to not only solar, which is still good in most of the parts of the north . . .

Mr. Hanson: No. I think you're maybe missing my point.

Mr. Feehan: Oh. Sorry.

Mr. Hanson: My point wasn't that they would be getting solar panels but that they would get an industry that was as successful as the Green Arrow program is, right?

Mr. Feehan: Well, they are.

Mr. Hanson: We can't all be in solar panels.

Mr. Feehan: No, but there are a number of proposals, particularly in the north, with regard to biomass. I know that, for example, in Paul Cree they're in the process of building their brand new school.

We happened to visit, as I do, and I said: well, what is this that you are building here? They showed me the plans, and I said right away: well, what are you doing with regard to climate leadership initiatives with regard to the build of the school? And they said: well, that's a great idea; we have some plans. And they worked with us, and they worked with the federal government, and they did some revamps of their build. As a result, their school is a massively advanced school with regard to climate leadership initiatives. They are now starting a whole initiative around biomass pellet production that they will use to heat the school and also to provide employment for the community and to use the resources of the trees that they have available up in that area.

So it's been successful in about three different ways. Not only is the school itself saving money, but it is working with the federal government to bring all of our initiatives together to enhance and then to provide ongoing employment and potentially an industry where they can provide pellets – I think that is their hope – throughout the rest of the province in the future.

Mr. Hanson: Good. Okay.

I'm going to try a couple, and we'll go to the '60s scoop because we had talked about that. I know that you just finished an engagement. I think you had six different ones all across the province. I attended the one at Blue Quills in St. Paul. I think I mentioned to you at the time that it had to be quite emotionally exhausting to attend six of those. I know that it was quite a long day that we had there listening to the stories. Do you consider that engagement complete now, or are you continuing on with that in some other form?

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Before I even start, I actually want to just express my appreciation for your attending. I just want you to know that you are the only nongovernment MLA to ever show up at any of those meetings, even though they're publicly announced. Your presence there was noted not only by myself but by the community members. It was very much appreciated, so thank you. It's important.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. I really try to support that, especially the Blue Quills area.

Mr. Feehan: Now, you might know, because you've had some involvement with this process from quite a while ago, that originally I met with Adam North Peigan. He came in and told me his story, and I said to him at my very first meeting: "Adam, I think this is a very important story. I'm very concerned about it, but you're only one person. You're talking to me as an individual. I need you to go out and start a community of people talking about this so that we can engage." He came back. With your help, in fact, he came back and said: "We have a group of people now. We would like to work with the government." So we provided them with some funding for creating a society. Then we did something that I understand is the very first time it's ever been done. We sat down and created an agreement with that society to work with us on the development of the whole program.

So this was not a government program foisted on the community. This was the community coming to us and us enhancing, empowering the community to gather together to make a plan with us. We laid out a plan of how the process would work, and that resulted in the decision to have six sessions around the province of Alberta, which were extremely well attended. I think we had well over 700 people attend those meetings throughout the time, as compared to Manitoba, which, I understand, had less than 10, by the way, before they did their apology. I didn't mean to slam

Manitoba. Sorry. We had 700 people, and that was because of the way we went about doing it, and we're working with the community.

Now, we have finished those six initial sessions, but I've been very clear to the community that this is a process. There's no end date. There's no point at which we just say: "We're done. It's all over." Even at the point we are now, we are working with that same group of people to draw together the literally thousands of responses that we got, particularly from the 700 people that attended, but we had hundreds of them submit online and hundreds of them submit other kinds of stories along the way through community members. We're drawing all of those things together, and we're helping the community to identify what it is that will constitute a meaningful and deep apology on behalf of the provincial government. That's the process we're in now. Then once we are ready, the government will write the apology. We felt it was important that we say that this is an apology written by us. The government is responsible for the '60s scoop, so the pen needs to be in our hand, and they agreed.

Then we will be moving later this spring to working toward the finalization of that process. The Premier will prepare the actual written apology, and that written apology will be delivered publicly, hopefully in the Legislature if the timing is correct. Then we will continue to work with that same community, the '60s scoop survivor society that you know about.

So what does this mean now? The apology, again, is still not the end of the process. It is part of the work to actually rectify and move toward reconciliation, which I know you support.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. That is one of the things that I did hear when we were out at Blue Quills, the concern that: how do you apologize for something that happened in the past while you watch it continue going on today? That was some of the concern that we heard from people, that it hasn't ended, that we're still apprehending children and not really effectively following the kinship care issue. I think that's something that we have to keep in mind. We don't want to be going down this road 20 years from now, apologizing to another group of people.

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. I completely concur. As you know, we've been working with a multiparty panel to evaluate child welfare services and to make recommendations for change, and we will be working in the next little while implementing those kinds of changes because we're committed to making sure that that's an ongoing process. That's why we're committed to continuing to support the society itself and the work that they're doing and, of course, to increase the public awareness of what happened during the '60s scoop and how we change that.

I've always said that the goal has to be that indigenous children should not be any more represented in child welfare services than nonindigenous people, and as long as we have that split between them – you may know that the government has done work over the last number of years to reduce the number of children in care. Unfortunately, what happened was that nonindigenous families and indigenous families, their numbers both went down, but the distance between the two didn't narrow very much.

4:20

Mr. Hanson: The interesting part of the '60s scoop, something that it kind of frustrates me that it hasn't been addressed, is that a lot of the people that worked in the system, in the bureaucracy and in social services, are now enjoying their retirement, and they've never been brought in to – have you tried to access any of those people to get their side of what went on at that time?

Mr. Feehan: Well, there are lots of communications with people who worked in the department at various times about what

happened and so on. We haven't spent a lot of time kind of looking back at the workers themselves because, of course, the workers were implementing policies that were generated by government. The emphasis is on: how do we actually do things differently now? How can we actually engage in a process that ensures fewer indigenous children come into care?

This is linked to lots of the other things that we do. I mean, we increased minimum wage because we know that one of the reasons why children come into care is because of poverty. So if we increase minimum wage, then people can afford, you know, to provide for their own children in a reasonable way, and they get more of a help up to live sort of satisfactory, middle-class lives. We've increased the school nutrition programs, and we've increased the child tax credit, all of which are about the notion that you need to provide surrounding services to, you know, uplift the people. If we provide those services to uplift the people, then they're much less likely to come into care.

It also is a tie-in to the initiatives under the United Nations declaration you were mentioning earlier. One of the things that we committed to at the time, one of those 20 initiatives, was that we would train everybody who works for the government in whichever department more about the history of indigenous people: what they should know, how they should relate to them, all of those kinds of things. I'm pleased to kind of pre-empt an announcement that's coming up fairly soon about the fact that we have had this internal process, multiministerial process, and we will be very soon announcing that all government employees will receive training over a five-year period – that's thousands of people in this province – which will enhance . . .

Mr. Hanson: If I could make a suggestion on that point, you should have them all watch the *Dakota 38* movie from down in the States because it's quite an eye-opener as well.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. You know, we actually have some similar ones here in Alberta. I know that, you know, indeed when I was a child welfare worker back in the 1980s, there was a young man who hanged himself, Richard Cardinal.

Mr. Hanson: It happens all too often.

Mr. Feehan: There's an incredible film that was made at that time by one of the great filmmakers, who has passed on subsequently of cancer, I believe. We're using those kinds of resources as well as the knowledge of the community to teach us: how was this messed up so badly? I'm not even blaming a particular government, by the way. This is true across the country.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. This was going on for a long time. One thing that I'm sure that you and I have always agreed on is that poverty and opportunities on First Nations is the root of not only the '60s scoop thing but going on to the opioid crisis as well, right?

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. Exactly.

Mr. Hanson: If I could ask a couple of questions there, I'd appreciate that, Chair. Under business plan outcome 1, key strategy 1.3: "Supporting Indigenous Peoples and groups to deal with the opioid crisis by working with Health." What is the plan for the emergency response to opioids on reserves?

Mr. Feehan: On reserves? Okay. You know, it's actually, again, an area – I will answer, but I will direct you a little bit also to the Ministry of Health, which is primarily responsible for this.

Of course, we've been very concerned about it in Indigenous Relations, and you'll see that we have worked with Alberta Health

in order to support them in their indigenous approaches. You'll notice in our business plan on page 3 that key strategy 1.3 addresses this particularly. But we have had representatives from our ministry participate on a variety of committees associated with this, including the Valuing Mental Health Executive Steering Committee, the indigenous integration committee, the addictions integration committee, and other related task forces.

We also established the Indigenous Opioids Advisory Subcommittee in 2016 and developed two reports from that. The first one was telling the story of the impacts of opioids on indigenous peoples in Alberta, and the second one was recommendations for actions, and they were presented to the Minister's Opioid Emergency Response Commission in August of last year, 2017, and influenced a lot of the allocation decisions that have been made.

We're working particularly closely, of course, with the Blood Tribe in southern Alberta, who first was able to identify a crisis in their community. Not that it hasn't been everywhere, but they were able to. Through the First Nations development fund, which we discussed earlier, we were able to provide \$280,000 to support the development of a community-led initiative to address opioid use and misuse in the community. In fact, just recently we supported their new program, which is working with people coming out of institutions and re-entering the community. Again, I'm kind of pre-empting an announcement here, but I feel like you need to know that we have put money into the program at the place where we know that people who have largely been users are seeking help for the very first time often as they leave the jails, as they leave the rehab centres. We're working with them.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you.

The Chair: Please go ahead.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. I don't know if you are aware of it or not, but two weeks ago a lot of folks from the Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills constituency as well as Bonnyville-Cold Lake met with the Justice minister. We had members from First Nations and Métis settlements there as well to talk about rural crime. It's as big an issue on the Métis settlements and on the reserves as it is everywhere else. They're all kind of tied into that. Again, it goes back to the lack of opportunities and poverty.

You know, I talked to some of the young guys. Really, somebody should put forward some more information on the actual state of affairs because there's a lot of misconception about how much money is doled out. I know that when you look at the federal, the money that goes into their First Nations ministry looks like a huge number, but when you break it down to the individuals, you know, an 18-year-old kid from Whitefish Lake gets \$281 a month. It's not enough because there are no opportunities to upgrade or get training close to home, which, as we've talked about before, is very, very important to our First Nations people. That's why I really support the Blue Quills university as well as Keyano College and Portage College up in my area.

Mr. Feehan: Well, as you know, we've been providing supports to all of those institutions.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. It's especially important because the ability to go to school and continue education right now in the communities is a great opportunity that we can't afford to miss.

We'll go on to a couple of other questions here. Under the business plan again, outcome 2, key strategy 2.1, you state that you will be "supporting government-to-government processes to address land and natural resource management matters of mutual interest," and key strategy 2.2 starts off by saying that you'll be

“responsive to the needs of First Nations, Métis organizations, government, industry, and other stakeholders.” Does this mean that if your government’s interests stand opposed to the interests of the indigenous peoples, the ACO will not act as an open-minded consultant? Now, I’ll just give you a quote here. It says that the government of Alberta “had already made up its mind on certain issues, and was simply entertaining the attendees.” That came from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Landmen. The feeling that they had at that time was that, you know, there was a consultation process, but the decision had already been made.

Mr. Feehan: Well, I’m glad you brought this up. I know that when I became minister, one of the things I heard from the First Nations and the Métis settlements and Métis communities but also from industry was that the consultation process as it existed over the last number of years in this province, originally set up by the previous government, was not working and that something needed to be enhanced for us to be able to get to a better place.

You may know that I initiated a process almost two years ago now where we went initially to 48 First Nations and said to them: what needs to be different with regard to the consultation process? On a nation-to-nation basis, one by one at the time we gathered ideas for change in terms of the consultation process. Then after completing that process, about a year, I met with industry. I had been meeting with them sort of individually along the way to let them know that the process was going on, but we gathered them all together. We had some major meetings both in Edmonton and Calgary with over 100 attendees at each of the meetings. We told them last year that we would be initiating a consultation renewal process and that in that consultation renewal process there were a number of items that we thought would likely be addressed.

4:30

I then subsequently met with those same groups in the fall of this last year to give them a list of some of the areas that indeed we had decided to move on and some of the ideas that were brought forward by the First Nations communities. Later this month I meet with them again personally for the third time. Of course, my ministry staff have been meeting repeatedly, constantly throughout this time to talk about some of the outcomes of that and some of the specific consultation renewal processes that we intend to write into policy this year.

It’s been a very engaging process both with industry and with First Nations. We’ve had an extremely high level of participation, as I say, for the First Nations individually, plus they came to an all-chiefs meeting as well. We have been doing a consultation process not only with the First Nations, but we have one with the Métis settlements, that you may know about as well, that’s following a parallel process, and we are working with the Métis and the rest of the province as well on a third consultation process, all of which will be leading to policy changes coming in the next year, based on that extensive conversation.

You may also know that, of course, I meet regularly with industry who are land and resource extraction partners: oil companies, forestry companies, and so on. I spent a fair amount of time at the Calgary Stampede in a closed-room meeting, not out watching the horses, and as a result, you know, we’ve had a very deep engagement with everyone about the changes that need to happen, and that’s the process that we’re engaged in now.

I look forward to the outcome, that will be announced by June, approximately, of this year. We should have a fairly clear idea about the wording of some of those policy changes. We’ll give that to all of the nations. We’ll give that to all of the industry partners and provide

them time, until the fall, to give us feedback on the actual wording, and then we will in the fall implement the actual policy changes based on this extensive two-year process that I’ve been engaged in.

Mr. Hanson: It’s a tough one because when you’re trying to promote the oil and gas industry as well as protect the rights of First Nations, it’s almost like a conflict of interest, being caught in between there.

Mr. Feehan: It can be. But, you know, also, one of the things – and I think you know this quite well, that the nations actually do not want it to become a conflict; they want it to become a relationship. There are nations out there that have worked very hard to develop extremely positive relationships with oil and gas.

I mean, everyone knows about the great story of Fort MacKay, which has one of the highest living standards in this province. It’s because they have worked very hard to work with the companies around them to ensure that while the land and resource extraction is going on, they are part of it, that they don’t simply sit there and watch the trucks run down the street out in front of their homes without also having jobs, without also having businesses that service the oil industry, without also having equity partnership. In fact, this year, you may know, the Mikisew Nation and Fort MacKay invested in a big tank farm, and from that they’ve been able to provide an incredible level of economic well-being to their community. What we’re trying to do is to make sure that that’s true everywhere else in the province.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. I think that’s the important thing, making sure that they understand the opportunities that are available and know that they’re not going to be left out of, you know, the conversation, which is really . . .

Mr. Feehan: One of the other benefits that comes from this – you know, we’ve been told that the problem is that the federal government has a regulatory process, the AER has a regulatory process, and the ACO has a regulatory process. Both the First Nations and the industry have said to us: this is not good for business; this causes a conflict. So one of the directives I’ve given in this policy exchange is that we will look for any places where we can match up those processes and try to make them either one process for three levels of government or three areas of evaluation if that’s possible . . .

Mr. Hanson: Are we talking about red tape reduction?

Mr. Feehan: Absolutely.

Mr. Hanson: Wow.

Mr. Feehan: We’ve been really clear about that from day one, and I think we’ve found some great ways to do it. In fact, I’ve been meeting with Jim Ellis from the AER on a number of occasions. I have another meeting next week. The point of that is: where can we look at the AER process, because that’s another Alberta one, and say, “Look, you’re already doing some pieces. Can we just use those pieces in order to meet the needs of the ACO process, or, vice versa, can the ACO feed information into the AER process so that you don’t have to ask for it again?” You know, the lesson we’ve learned . . .

Mr. Hanson: If we’re just adding on another layer of regulatory process, are we going to cause . . .

Mr. Feehan: We’re looking forward to some things. You know, the AER is talking about putting in a community-fronted computer

system that will allow everyone to see which projects are being proposed and what's going to happen. It will make the information widely available. The First Nations will be able to see every industry as it makes proposals that might affect their treaty rights. If we can work with them on that, then that tends to do something that's very important, and that is that it moves the conversation earlier on in the process of land and resource extraction.

One of the problems that was identified to me when I first came in was that aside from some excellent companies that were going out way ahead of time – and there are good examples of that, by the way – too many of the companies were coming when they were ready to roll. They, you know, wanted to put the shovels in the ground, saying, “Okay; now what do we need to do with First Nations?” Of course, those nations were saying: “You've given us no time. How can we do this?” Particularly if it's the wrong season of the year or if they need to take elders on the land and the weather is interfering.

As a result, we've been really working to get the relationships built far ahead of time so that even two years before you want to put those shovels in the ground, you're having the type of conversations that you need, you're gathering information from First Nations about where the problem areas are likely to be, the First Nations are aware of when a project will happen, not only this immediate project that's going to happen this spring but: how does that tie into the larger project that you have going that maybe will stay in their community for 50 years or even 100 years if you're talking forestry?

Mr. Hanson: Part of the issue that I see – you know, I've talked about north of Bonnyville and the Lac La Biche area – is that when this consultation takes place and the promises are made to a community, a lot of it is not just with the First Nations communities but, say, the town of Lac La Biche itself and the businesses there: we're going to build this project here, and here's all the economic development opportunity that you're going to see.

Then, is there anybody in the government or any ministry that's overseeing that to make sure that those promises are actually kept? Right now we're seeing a lot of companies up there that are sitting going broke. I can tell you that things aren't quite as rosy as everybody says they are here in Alberta because we do have companies that are going broke, tradesmen that are working for 50 per cent of what they used to. In the meantime they're seeing companies from southern Alberta that have to drive through their town to go to the projects, vehicles from out of province as well. It's very, very frustrating for them because they were promised during the consultation that there were going to be opportunities for First Nations, there were going to be opportunities for local companies, and they're not seeing those opportunities. I think that that's something where we kind of have to, in discussions with the oil and gas industry, make sure that promises are kept and the communities are kind of first on the list.

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. You know that I'm going to agree with you. I mean, that's extremely important, and we're trying to build that into the process that we've designed. We also realize that there are impact benefit agreements that occur between companies and local First Nations which we have no part in. We're trying to design a system that doesn't get in the way of the natural relationship on a business level between nations and industry yet at the same time ensures that there is a basic level of communication and consultation that goes on. Now, some companies and some nations are so far ahead that mostly they want us just to not interfere with their process.

Mr. Hanson: Stay out of the way. Yeah.

Mr. Feehan: And we are. You know, we're separating out the different levels of consultation. You may know that it goes at three different levels, one, two, three. At level 3 we're really trying to make sure that nations are talking to industry back and forth and that all of those kinds of deals around work that they may have or equity participation or just training or other opportunities are all dealt with between those parties.

What we're trying to also do, though, is to make sure that other companies who haven't done that well in the past learn to step up and learn to come into a relationship. I've always said that the best way to do this is not through regulation; the best way to do this is through a relationship. If the nation has a relationship with the industry, they know the people there, they can sit at the table and express their needs, and the industry can hear that, then you're going to get much better results.

What you'll see when we get this policy out is that so much of it is actually focused on: how do we get these people at the table talking to each other in a way that actually precludes the problems that come with last-minute, conflict-laden, and, in fact, court-ordered decisions being made? That's not good for anybody, and I really want the nations and, of course, the towns and communities of northern Alberta to benefit from the resources.

4:40

Mr. Hanson: They're all together. They live together, they're bunked in together: very, very important.

One thing before I run out of time here that I wanted to hit on is the Blue Quills university, that I mentioned earlier. I don't see any real line items. I know that it falls under postsecondary education, but the importance that it has to the seven nations that are involved up there that oversee it – they're not able to apply for grant money because they're not recognized as a separate entity.

But I think I had mentioned in a question that they receive, you know, about 10 per cent, if that, of the funding that a university in Edmonton gets or Calgary, yet the universities in Edmonton and Calgary recognize the people that are graduating out of there so well that they put them in charge of their indigenous relations programs. It kind of doesn't make a lot of sense to me. We really need to step up, whether it's through your ministry or a combination of a couple, to throw some support behind there because, as mentioned in my question, they can't even afford a truckload of gravel to put on their parking lot, and you've got the University of Alberta building huge, wonderful buildings and that. So I think we really need to support it.

If we're going to be serious about supporting education and advanced education and doing it in our communities, we need to really concentrate on making sure that places like Blue Quills, Portage College, Keyano get the support they need. They're all struggling. They're dealing with the carbon tax just like everybody else. They're dealing with minimum wage increases like everybody else. Their students are working just as hard to get their degrees as everyone else.

Mr. Feehan: Well, I'll put you down for expanding the budget of Advanced Education.

Mr. Hanson: No. I'm not talking about expanding the budget. Finding efficiencies . . .

Mr. Feehan: Well, you're asking for more dollars, and I get that.

Mr. Hanson: . . . and spreading it out.

Mr. Feehan: You know, I taught at Blue Quills, so you know that I have a deep affection for it. They, of course, aren't the only university in that place across the province or higher institute of advanced learning. We do have a system that recognizes universities at different levels and different funding that goes with them. I have addressed that as the problem. You know that I've met with the people at Blue Quills, and I'm sure you are aware of that. I know many of them personally from my previous experience there. Even when we did our '60s scoop, we went out there because we're trying to bring some highlight to that community. We are looking at those issues, and I have addressed it with Minister Schmidt and tried to identify it. We try to make sure that they do receive grants whenever possible. Our climate leadership initiative, for example, has provided monies to Blue Quills for their services, and mental health money from our mental health review in Advanced Education went to Blue Quills.

Mr. Hanson: That's all important, but what I'm looking at is maybe transferring some money from Advanced Education to their programs so that they actually get recognized. As I said in my question, a degree is a degree is a degree, whether it comes from Blue Quills or U of A or U of C.

Very quickly, before we run out of time, the geodata mapping project: where are we with that? It's been going on for a long time. How much money has been spent on it, and how close are we to being complete?

Mr. Feehan: Okay. I'll just ask the staff to look for the dollar amount, but I can tell you that it's been going on for quite some time. We're getting very close to the point where we actually have a geodata map for every single nation. I think that by the end of this year we can say that 100 per cent of the nations will have one. I'm looking to make sure that I'm not lying, but I know we're darned close. I'm happy to have that happen. In 2017-18 we had a target of 85 per cent of the geodata maps being created, and we met that target. In 2018-19 we expect 100 per cent of the communities to have a map.

Of course, those maps are ongoing. They aren't stagnant. There are reasons why we need to keep the system in play and to make sure that as things change, as new land is acquired, as traditional territories are taken up by industry for various projects and activities and, therefore, practices like harvesting, hunting, fishing, trapping start to shift as a result of industry development, the geodata maps also reflect those kinds of changes. We're working on that.

This has been a pretty successful piece of government work, frankly, in the last little while. There are always going to be some issues because not all of the nations agree on, you know, what the map looks like, or when maps fold over each other because one nation's land runs across another nation's land, which is perfectly legitimate, they might have some concern about how that's laid out, particularly as treaty land entitlements are resolved and nations get more land that they didn't have before. Often they cannot find land contiguous with their nation, so they get a piece of land that's a little bit farther away, you know, and it begins to sort of then bump into the land that's traditional territory of another nation. This geodata mapping process tries to accommodate all of those changes and shifting realities. It's been pretty successful so far.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now move on to the member from the third party. Member McPherson, would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

Ms McPherson: Yes, please.

The Chair: Please go ahead.

Ms McPherson: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Minister and to the staff from the ministry. I really appreciate you all being here. I just wanted to really acknowledge you for what you were saying earlier about focusing on relationships. I think that that is probably the biggest priority in this particular ministry, and I do want to commend you. I think that you've done a good job of that. I think there's still lots to do, but I certainly appreciate your efforts.

I'm also very conscious that I'm always learning in this role as a critic for this particular ministry, and I've learned a lot today, both from you and from MLA Hanson. It's obvious that you both have a great deal of passion about this particular portfolio. Yeah. It's been a learning experience so far.

I will just jump into it. I'm going to talk first about reconciliation. In the business plan, right at the beginning, setting the context, part of what the context includes is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's final report. One thing that I was not too clear on when I was reading through this was whether the calls to action are part of that or if it's just the report itself.

Mr. Feehan: No, the calls to action would be definitely part of it. Now, you may know that those calls to action are written quite widely, so not all of them apply to any particular level of government or any particular community group. Some apply to provincial governments, some to municipal, some to school boards, some to the Pope. As a result, you know, we took a look at them all, and we have committed to wherever possible trying to implement those calls to action.

The primary way that we responded was the call to action that particularly requested that we adhere to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. That started that whole process for us. If you want to sort of look at what we're doing to respond to the calls to action, the process of, you know, the 20 recommendations that came out of the United Nations declaration and subsequent other actions are a fulfillment of the things we learned from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I personally attended, as many people did, when it was here in Edmonton. As you know, those experiences stay with you. They are very profound. We have as a result tried to be honest to our experiences and our learning at that time and really make changes in government behaviour and our relationships with the community and, you know, make a real difference in terms of our policies and practices moving forward.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

In doing that, in the relationship with First Nations in Alberta have you solicited from the communities what their priorities are? In terms of the 94 calls to action have priorities been identified by the communities, and if so, how are you going about addressing them?

Mr. Feehan: Well, as I just indicated, in our conversations with Grand Chief Willie Littlechild, for example, who was one of the commissioners on the TRC and, in fact, was one of the authors of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples – we're quite privileged in this province to have someone like that – and with other people like that we talked about: how do we move forward; what's the best way? We were terrified of government sort of going, "Oh, okay; we've got some great ideas, and we're just going to fix everything," just a terrible way to go about doing it.

4:50

As a result, you know, the advice we were given at that time was that the United Nations declaration was the best way to fulfill the TRC. I know they're separate documents, but they actually come together. Now, of course, we've read both, and we act on both. But our list of initiatives from the United Nations declaration has been largely motivated by that whole process.

Of course, we have venues such as the Treaty 8 protocol table and the Blackfoot Confederacy protocol table where there is a particular table set up to look at those kinds of issues. In both cases I am the minister responsible for that particular initiative, and it gives us a chance to talk about ways that we can live those documents rather than just simply, you know, filling out small pieces of it.

In addition, we have two commissions. We have the First Nations women's socioeconomic committee and the Métis women's socioeconomic committee, and both of those committees have been populated with highly respected people from the community, women. Both of them have 12 members on them plus an elder. They're highly respected. They had to go through a process of being interviewed for getting on there, and they have also been tasked with, you know: how do we live TRC; how do we live the United Nations declaration? And they have really done incredible things to help us do that.

That's led to some of our work, for example, around women and violence, our increasing the amount of money to women's shelters and particularly shelters on-reserve, as happened this year, to the Moose Hide campaign – you see me wearing it today – those kinds of things, too, to putting more women in positions of decision-making in government. You may know now that we have a very strong policy that whenever we're fulfilling positions on agencies, boards, and committees, we are inviting First Nations women as well as everyone else, ensuring that First Nations women's voices are heard on those committees. And, of course, we also wrote into our framework agreement with the Métis Nation of Alberta to do similar pieces of work, where they inform us: what is their experience of the TRC, what is their experience of the United Nations declaration, and how do we fulfill those pieces?

Finally, I have one last piece. I've already mentioned the training of all of the Alberta public service employees. We will see some great movements forward as we educate people both in our school system with our curriculum review and in our public service employees through our training that will occur over the next five years and train some – I don't know – 85,000 or more people.

So lots of commitment.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

Just a couple of follow-on questions. It sounds like the UN declaration and the TRC calls to action operate more as a framework or a lens to view work through. Would that be a fair assessment?

Mr. Feehan: Well, I'm not sure that that's quite the framework. We have really committed to the United Nations declaration, and we say that we accept it. And when you accept it, then it's about living it afterwards, and it's about, you know . . .

Ms McPherson: Demonstrating that.

Mr. Feehan: Demonstrating that in very practical ways.

But we've also really committed to making sure that we don't get ahead of ourselves on this, that we're always working with the communities and not saying, "Oh, well; we'll make up our minds as to what happens, and then we'll just do them," because, of

course, that would be a disaster. You know what happens when you make assumptions about what's good for someone else. So what you'll see is much more of an organic process.

I'm sure you know that I'm a social worker by training. Process is very, very important. As a result, we don't just simply make a list of tasks and go ahead and do them. We figure out a process. We invite people in. The '60s scoop process is a reflection of: we're going to do this differently. You know, we weren't going to just do an apology, stand up and say, "We're sorry," and then move on, just to check off a box. We could have done that, and it would have checked off a TRC box, right? Instead, we said: we're working with the community; we're going to empower them, enhance their ability to work with us, set out a process together, fulfill that process together, and make changes in how we do things as much as in what we do.

Ms McPherson: Okay. Thank you.

What I'm trying to get at here is: how can we follow where the work is at? How do we know? I understand that it will never be: oh, a hundred per cent; we're done. But how do we stay apprised of where the TRC and UN declaration are at play in the work that your ministry is doing?

Mr. Feehan: Well, one of the things that, you know, I would say to you is that because it's truly embedded in terms of a philosophy of how you do things, it should actually be evident in everything we do. We're trying to stay away from some simplistic kind of list of things we do. Now, of course, there are technical ways that you can learn about the things that we do. Our annual report, our business plan: those kinds of things outlay some of the particular projects that we're engaged in. But you should see it in terms of how we actually conduct ourselves as a government, the fact that we have water to reserves, the fact that we have money put towards off-reserve housing, the fact that we have money in the climate leadership initiative, and just how we go about doing it.

On the climate leadership initiative, for example, not only do we have this money and these great seven programs, where we've had 124 applications approved just in this one year alone, but we also have sat down with the nations and said: look, we have this money; what do we need to do to actually give you power and control over this money? So last year . . .

Ms McPherson: I'm going to interrupt you because I don't have a lot of time. I will get to that. I was really looking for the information about the TRC and the UN declaration, so thank you very much.

Just tied in with that, I think it's a little bit not so clear, but in terms of new public infrastructure that's being built – hospitals, community infrastructure, schools – how has the government ensured that there is space available for indigenous people to be able to continue, let's say, a smudging ceremony in a school? Is that part of developing an infrastructure plan?

Mr. Feehan: Yes, absolutely. You know, one of the things that we did when we gave out that United Nations declaration is that we made sure that every single ministry had it, not just the Ministry of Indigenous Relations. So Transportation, Infrastructure, Justice, Education, and Advanced Education all were asked the same thing, and we follow that up internally in a number of different ways.

One is that we have deep communication between our deputy minister and, of course, other people in the department and their counterparts in all of the ministries. Also, whenever anything comes to cabinet, one of the things that we have instituted, that did not exist before, is a lens of indigenous relations: how does this affect indigenous people particularly? Every cabinet report addresses that

as a question. That's just a way for us to follow up on making sure that we're not just talking the talk, but we're actually living it in a day-to-day way.

Ms McPherson: Okay. Thanks.

I am going to move on to the '60s scoop. Through the process that the government has gone through, there are certainly a number of records that have been created as a result of that to be able to document exactly what happened. I think, you know, that it's been identified that one of the great tragedies of where we are right now is that a lot of history has not been captured. So how could we possibly learn from the past if we're not even aware of what happened? In the exercise of going through this with First Nations people, have you made the records available to all of the survivors and their families?

Mr. Feehan: We haven't made a complete decision on what's happening with the records. As you can imagine, we've amassed a significant number of records. Some of them we need to be responsible from a FOIP perspective on; other ones maybe less so.

Now, we had a number of different processes. When we actually met with families coming forward or individuals coming to our sessions, we had recorders writing things down, so they were actually watching what was being written down, the words that they were saying, and gave us permission to gather those pieces. We also had a computer program that allowed people to write in those kinds of things. We also had artwork. We have a number of huge panels that were created in that process.

We're in the process of working with the '60s scoop survivors society to make decisions about the availability and access to all of those things because, of course, they've addressed that same question, and we're moving forward in that way. We do have to protect the FOIP pieces, but we're trying to get the statements of their stories, without identifying individuals, available to as many people as possible.

Ms McPherson: I think it's really important for the community at large to be able to learn, to be able to find out what exactly did happen. Unless you're really proactive about it, it can be a challenge to understand the context of where we are today because it isn't something that we learned about in school when we were growing up.

5:00

I do have a question here that maybe you'll incorporate in the next year. Does the budget include the creation of a dashboard? If somebody either who testified or who is interested wanted to get information, wanted access to that information, is there a one-stop place where that person could go and easily access that information?

Mr. Feehan: It is part of the dialogue with the '60s scoop survivors society about how we will use that information. Who owns it is actually part of the issue for us, and we are working very co-operatively with them on that. I suspect that you should be looking in Children's Services next year for finances related to it because they're the lead ministry with regard to dollars and organization moving forward.

Ms McPherson: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Feehan: Of course, we'll be there, but our role in this ministry is different than others. We facilitate more than we fund.

Ms McPherson: Well, I would think, then, if nothing like that has been put into place, that if people did want to get any of the records,

they would be obliged to use a FOIP request to be able to do that. Is that correct?

Mr. Feehan: Well, we're trying to avoid putting barriers in where possible. Whenever possible, we're trying to find a way to have access to stories or learnings without identifying individuals; therefore, we can avoid some of the FOIP issues. But, you know, we're trying to obey the laws, so we're moving forward carefully with the '60s scoop survivors society, making some of the decisions over the next little while. But the idea of having, as you say, some kind of a dashboard where people could go and use it as a resource for schools or church groups, child welfare agencies, social work programs like I taught in: I think it would be a wonderful idea, and I'll make sure that we address it.

Ms McPherson: I just facilitated a conversation last weekend between Syrian refugee women and First Nations women in Calgary, and a resource like that would be such a huge benefit to be able to bridge those gaps in understanding one another. I would really love to see something like that.

Mr. Feehan: Yeah.

Ms McPherson: Yeah. I think it would be a huge benefit.

Mr. Feehan: I agree with you a hundred per cent.

Ms McPherson: I'm going to move on to the climate leadership plan. As a fraction of the overall climate leadership initiative – like, the indigenous climate leadership initiative: what fraction is that of the overall plan?

Mr. Feehan: It would be about 2.8 per cent, I think. Yes. I did remember it, 2.8 per cent. But one of the things – you know, the nations have addressed that with me as well – I also want to remind you about is that the First Nations and the Métis communities have access to the larger plans, the same as every other Albertan does. This is only 2.8 per cent that is specifically dedicated to the First Nations and Métis communities. This is the amount of money at this particular time that has increased this year up to just over 53 million dollars . . .

Ms McPherson: Right.

Mr. Feehan: . . . and the amount of money that we are also looking at to turn over to a First Nations and Métis led governance structure. That's the one that, well, we've been working on for well over a year. But it's been a very successful process. In fact, we just met this last week with the First Nations and Métis communities, and I was amazed. I had set up three meetings in the spring last year – April, May, and June – to meet with all these people to say: can we get together to create this governance structure? And they basically fired me somewhere at the end of that, not because they were upset with what I was doing, but they were taking it on. They said: you're right, but we need to do this.

So they went away. They had some committees. When I walked into the room – and I was invited to last week – I looked around, and I saw maybe 100 leaders in that room that were sitting around. They told me it was the first time that the Métis Nation, the Métis Settlements General Council, and the First Nations from this province had sat together and worked on a policy issue together since the 1982 constitutional crisis. This has been a very successful process because we paid attention to the process, because it was built on relationships. Now we're going to take those dollars and turn it over to that group and say: you now not only have the dollars,

but you have the ability to make decisions for your communities on what's best.

Ms McPherson: I only have a couple of minutes here. What is the number of green jobs generated in Alberta's indigenous communities last year through the climate leadership program? Can you table how that breaks down by community, and what is the target this year?

Mr. Feehan: As you can imagine, I will have to get back to you with those kinds of details, but I can tell you that it's been quite wonderful. We've been able to not only take our dollars, but the federal government has also put dollars into green energy jobs. We have used that money to enhance some of our programming. As a result, there are many nations that are creating jobs, such as, you know, the Green Arrow program in Montana, that we discussed earlier, but many other nations as well.

Ms McPherson: A similar question: what's the economic impact of the development generated by Alberta's indigenous communities through the climate leadership program? Again, please table how that breaks down by community and what the target is this year as well.

Mr. Feehan: Okay. Thank you. I appreciate the questions. One other thing I just want to mention is that, you know, the economic benefits here are about to just bloom – I don't know how else to put it – because we have First Nations that are invited for the very first time into the energy system in this province. In our REP 2 we made a requirement that if they wanted to provide renewable energies in this province, they needed to make sure that First Nations were at the table, and that included not just jobs.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We will now take a five-minute break and reconvene at 5:13.

[The committee adjourned from 5:06 p.m. to 5:12 p.m.]

The Chair: Okay. I want to call us back to order, everyone. If everyone can please take their seats.

Now we're moving on to the private members of the government caucus. You have 20 minutes. Would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

Mr. Rosendahl: Yes. We would.

The Chair: Okay. Please go ahead, Mr. Rosendahl.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you, Minister and staff, for being here. We'll proceed. I'll share my time with the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Creek. Between the two of us we'll be looking after the questions for the government caucus.

We'll get right into it. On page 174 of the budget the line item we're looking at is 1.1, which is the minister's office budget. I'll let you find it. What I would like to know is: what is the amount spent on travel? If you could comment on that.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Sure. Yeah. Well, as you know, the ministry has really increased the amount of travel over the years, over previous years, because I've made a firm commitment early on to go to the communities, not always just to sit here and wait for them to come to us. We did quite a bit of travel in the last year. I've been to 46 of the 48 First Nations and all eight of the settlements, and the amount that we spent was around \$35,000 to do that. In 2017-18, in addition to meetings with the treaty chiefs and the First Nations and the Métis women's councils and the Western Cree Tribal Council, I visited more than 20 communities that are not First

Nations or Métis settlements but, rather, just communities relevant to the indigenous communities in our province. We budgeted \$35,000 for travel this year, which was an increase of \$5,000 over last year.

Mr. Rosendahl: Okay. Well, thank you.

As a supplemental to that question, what I'm looking at is: how important – like, I've heard several comments that you've made already. What importance do you put on travel for the ministry in regard to that?

Mr. Feehan: Well, I think it's very important because one of the things that you've heard me say is that a relationship is what's going to make this work, not new rules and regulations. My commitment is to go to the places where people live, and I have not only, as I've mentioned, been to all the First Nations and the Métis settlements and the towns, but I've also been to friendship centres throughout the province. I've also been to learning institutions like Blue Quills throughout the province where First Nations people go and Grande Prairie and other places – right? – the very northern communities, the south. It's my absolute firm belief that if I go and I see people and where they live and how they live and the issues that they're confronted with on a daily basis, then my job as an advocate and as a conveyor of information to other ministries, which is pretty fundamental to my ministry, is better done.

Very often I go into a community. They aren't just sending me a letter saying: we have a bad road, and we can't get down it. They take me down that road, and they often do it with great relish, take me down that road and hit every bump they can possibly hit along the way. It's a joke between us, but the point is there. So when they say to me, "Well, do you know that road that leads up to the mountain?" and I go, "Yup, I know that road," we can talk about it specifically. If they can say to me at the time, "Well, that culvert there where the stream goes underneath," and I can say, "I know," because we stopped on that bridge, and we looked down at the culvert, and I heard the stories about the SUV that got caught underneath – I'm thinking of a particular story – then I think my ability to come back and articulate a real need in an everyday, lived way is very high.

You know, the culvert I'm thinking of as I talk about this is literally on a road that goes to an end where there are five houses. If that road gets cut off, they are cut off. There's not a second road. There's not another way to come in. The school bus has to head down that road to pick up those kids, and every day that that school bus cannot make it across the stream where the culvert is is a day that kids miss school. We know that school completion on reserves is a big issue. Anything we can do to reduce the structural barriers, the things that stop kids from being successful, is something that's important to do.

My commitment is to go there to see those things, to come back to talk to the ministries and to say to the ministries at the time: "I've been there. I know what's going to happen if that road doesn't get fixed." I can see it. I can see the houses that get cut off. I can see the kids that are not going to go to school.

Mr. Rosendahl: Okay. Thank you.

Budget 2018-19 statement of operations. I'm looking at page 179, Minister. I'm looking at the government estimate that shows an increase in revenue. Can you indicate what makes up the amount on that line item?

Mr. Feehan: Right. Yes. Of course. Well, the net increase is an increase of \$3.8 million from 2017 to 2018 on that line, and then 2018-19 is composed of a number of different things. Indigenous

Relations will be receiving \$3.5 million in 2018-19 and \$3.5 million in 2019-20 from the federal low carbon economy leadership program. As I mentioned earlier, we've been able to leverage those federal dollars into our programs and therefore enhance the benefits for communities here. You'll see those things reflected there. They get reflected in the Alberta indigenous solar program and the Alberta indigenous energy efficiency or retrofit program. That's where the federal dollars have fit into our program structures, which is good.

I can tell you that in the last year both of those programs were oversubscribed. Communities were very anxious to hear that we had already given away all the money a few months ago, and we were able to say to them that with the federal dollars and the new influx of money coming in in our new budget, after this budget gets passed, we will be able to address all of those other needs that the communities have identified.

We actually have quite long lists of proposals all ready to go as soon as money is available. We're quite looking forward to it. I think it's going to be another very successful year for the indigenous climate leadership program.

5:20

Mr. Rosendahl: Okay. Thank you.

I'm going to switch gears a little bit. We're going to look at the business plan. What I'm looking at is on page 87 of your business plan. It says, "Indigenous Relations acts as a focal point for the province's relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples." Can you explain how the department acts as a focal point and why it's so important to indigenous communities for this type of work to occur based on what's in your plan here?

Mr. Feehan: Right. I think it's really important that people need to understand that in many ways we're an oddball ministry. It's set up in a way that's substantially different from the ministries of Education or Infrastructure and so on. All of those other ministries tend to develop programs, fund those programs, and make them run. My ministry is really much more of a relationship-based ministry. My responsibility is to understand what is happening in every other ministry in government, understand what's happening in each of the communities that I go to visit and talk to, and find ways to make sure that they're talking to each other and that the needs of the community are conveyed to the appropriate ministry.

When we talk about economic development: have they had a chance to go meet with the minister of economic development? Have they been able to talk about the ways that they're going to be able to reduce poverty, to increase the number of jobs and increase their ownership of businesses so that they can profit in the future? My job in many ways is very much that liaison job. That's what I spend a great deal of my time doing.

You know, the other ministers have also committed to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. One of the great privileges I have is to be in this ministry at a time of great change. There was a time that the minister really had to scrape down the hallway and knock on doors hoping to get let in in previous governments all across the country, and that's not my experience. My experience is that I am welcomed in, I have an opportunity to pitch my cause, and as a result we've seen some pretty fantastic changes going on in the community. I can give you lots and lots of examples about roads that are being built and infrastructure development across this province, changes in education curriculum, the creation of an indigenous tourism body, and other programs like that, that are the result of that kind of communication going on.

You see the budget of my ministry being small, but what you have to understand is that what you're seeing are just the dollars

that are used to leverage the budgets of the rest of the government. In fact, indigenous people are not confined to the \$243 million that I am able to distribute or to use on their behalf, but they are also part and parcel of the Infrastructure budget, the Education budget, the Health budget, and so on. It's just about facilitating that relationship and making sure that that works in a way that provides First Nations people with an opportunity to become part of the great success of this province.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you.

The next question I have is again from page 87 of the report. What exactly is your mandate in terms of renewed relationships when you look at the things that you've mentioned with indigenous governments, organizations, and communities? Can you give us more detailed information on that?

Mr. Feehan: Well, thank you. You know, as I've been speaking about today, my mandate is largely about relationships, but it's also about the fulfillment of promises. Those promises are largely inherent in our acceptance of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples as wisdom for us to guide our behaviour and our relationship with the indigenous people in this province and to address the fact that they have systemically been kept out of the success of this province in a variety of ways.

You know, unfortunately, if you look at the indicators of well-being, the indices that are put together, you will see that indigenous people are significant outliers, not doing as well in a variety of areas that we'd like them to do well. As a result, we have to find ways not simply to allow them to sort of come in the door and participate but to facilitate their coming in the door and participating. There have been so many structural barriers that have prevented them from being successful. We have to create the structures that enhance their ability to be successful.

I'd like to remind people that it's in my lifetime that the '60s scoop occurred. It's in my lifetime that the residential schools were taking children out of their families and their communities. It's in my lifetime that it was illegal for First Nations people to own a business. It's in my lifetime that it was illegal for them to have a lawyer. All of those things were explicit ways in which the structures of society were set up to ensure that they were not successful. Of course, you know, nobody wrote that down and said: that's the intention of this policy. But the reality is that that was the outcome of that policy. They undermined communities, they undermined families, they undermined economic participation, and they undermined academic success.

Now we have to go back and not only get rid of those terrible structural barriers, but we need to enhance the structures that will facilitate well-being, get more kids finishing school and into university, postsecondary, get more of those postsecondary people out into the business world, out into the academic world, out into the public service world, and have them be successful and to shape each of those universes in such a way that they become more responsive, more understanding, and more facilitating themselves of the next generation of indigenous people doing well in this province. That's the commitment we have.

As a result, we have adopted, you know, this nation-to-nation relationship, working with governments to have them tell us what needs to change. We've adopted this renewed relationship based on the United Nations declaration to, again, have them show us how it is that we need to be different in order to literally take our foot off their backs and to allow them to succeed but also to put out a hand in relationship to enhance their well-being.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you. I'd like to draw on this conversation a little bit further when I turn around and look at: how is your ministry strengthening the relationships with indigenous peoples? That's part of it. Then the other one is: how can you say how important it is to the indigenous peoples themselves when you look at that issue and those two things?

Mr. Feehan: Well, I can tell you that the indigenous community has been waiting a very long time, some would say hundreds of years, for the settler community to live up to their promises that they made when we agreed to share the land through the treaties and so on. They've always held true to their word. I mean, their word was that they would share the land with us as long as we agreed to share it back. Unfortunately, when we start to look at the way we've handled treaty relationships in this province, it's been just terrible. I don't know what other word to put on it.

You know, we can look at things as simple as the agricultural benefits section of the treaties, for example, in which we said to communities: we realize that you're not going to be able to hunt and trap in the way you used to be able to to feed your families, so we're going to enhance your ability to become farmers. We made long lists. I mean, if you read the list that everybody refers to as the cows and plows section of the treaty, it's a long list: we will give you X number of cows and X number of plows and rope and shovels and so on. I've got to tell you that it was with shame that I read those lists because I know that while the lists are there and they're obvious and simple to fulfill, none of them were fulfilled. Here we are, over a hundred years later, finally now coming to the point where we're even looking at the very treaties we signed. That's been a real problem.

We're trying to create ways now that it isn't just on the government, on the settler society to kind of step up and do the right thing. We're trying to create ways in which the First Nations are there telling us and guiding us and directing us and saying to us: "This is our understanding of the treaty. This is our understanding of the relationship. These are the things we need in order to enhance the well-being of our community."

5:30

So we set up protocol tables. We set up a table in Treaty 8 for education. We set up one for economic development. We set up one for health care. Those kinds of things. I think there are eight tables on that particular one, a similar number at the Blackfoot treaty. We're working on protocols with some of the other people. Of course, we have the agreement with the MNA, the framework agreement and the long-term agreement for the Metis Settlements General Council. In all of those what we're doing differently is that we're trying to put them at the table so it's not us interpreting what we're supposed to do. We are hearing from them what their expectations were when we signed those treaties and what their expectations are in terms of being full participants in the province of Alberta.

They get to say: this type of health care system works for us, and this type doesn't. They get to say: this type of educational setting works for us, and this type doesn't. The more they do that, the more likely we are to be able to meet their needs in an appropriate way and be able to see some successes: reduce those poverty rates, increase those graduation rates, and decrease the amount of disease and ill health in the community. I think that if we keep doing what we're doing now, our kids will be able to stand up proudly and be able to say: we found the problem, we addressed the problem, and we did it because we allowed the First Nations to teach us what needed to be different.

Mr. Rosendahl: Okay. Well, that's great.

Then further to that, what I'd like to draw on, too, is the fact of the issues that I work on in regard to West Yellowhead. There are differences between building relationships with communities and, like, in my area groups and organizations. Can you expand on that a little bit, the differences between the organizations and the groups that I have?

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. I think you are in the most unique place anywhere in the province. I know that . . . [Mr. Feehan's speaking time expired] Am I to continue?

The Chair: Sorry. You'll have to wait till next time.

Okay. We'll go back to the members of the Official Opposition. We're now at the 10 minutes if you want to go back and forth.

Mr. Loewen: Okay. I just wanted to ask a couple of questions. First of all, I want to just say that I appreciate your diligence and your passion that you have. I can tell you're taking things very serious, and I think that's greatly appreciated.

I remember the discussion we just had about driving down all the different roads and that sort of thing. I was wondering: is there any kind of initiative to make sure that all the First Nations communities have all-weather public roads year-round to them?

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. No. I think that's an excellent question. It is very problematic, and the problem is ours; that is, our governments, our federal and our provincial governments, decided many years ago to divide responsibilities with regard to our relationship with indigenous people. They divided what happened on-reserve from what happened off-reserve, and they decided that the federal government would be responsible for what happened on-reserve. As a result, there's been a jurisdictional divide that has resulted in, I would say, catastrophe. I don't know how else to put it. You know, the services provided on-reserve have always been underfunded. There have been Canadian human rights decisions on services to children in child welfare, for example, but if you look at systems such as the education system, if you look at transportation, it's the same thing.

We have been working as a government for the very first time to make decisions to reach past that jurisdictional divide and try to find ways to do things on-reserve, but it's difficult because if we build a road on Crown land here in the province of Alberta, we own that. We have financial responsibility for it. We are responsible for, you know, any lawsuits that occur as a result of the building of the road or the upkeep of that road if damages occur. But how do we do that on-reserve? We don't own that land. If we build a road on the reserve, who owns that road? Who's responsible for its upkeep? Who's responsible if there are damages that are caused to individuals, people, or to vehicles while they're on that road? The process now is just under way to figure out some of that.

Now, in some cases we've been able to move around that by simply turning our programs into grants; for example, the climate leadership initiative. When it comes to building solar panels, we were able to say: okay; what we're going to do is that we're simply going to turn this into a grant. The nation applies. They get the solar panel. They put it up. They own it. The problem with that, of course, is that that's money leaving the provincial government and doesn't get included in our balance book, and it's listed as a cost.

Mr. Loewen: Yeah. I just want to take you back to roads there. I guess the one spot I'm thinking of in particular is Little Red River Cree Nation and Fox Lake. I'm wondering: have you had any consideration of any road going into there, a public year-round road?

Mr. Feehan: Yes. That's excellent. You know, I've taken the road from John D'Or Prairie along the water's edge – that was not really a road – and taken the barge across to Fox Lake, so I know exactly of what you speak. There have been plans and processes – I'm not quite sure where they're at; I can check on it – to pave the road farther from John D'Or Prairie down to the turnoff into Fox Lake. But then again we have that problem. Once we build that provincial road up to the turnoff point and we leave the provincial highway, who builds the road that goes down to the river, and then who's responsible for the barges that go across? So, yes, we're having those conversations, including a conversation of perhaps taking it as far as Garden River, which is the last of the three communities that are part of that.

Mr. Loewen: Has there been any consideration on the south side of the Peace River, accessing Fox Lake from the south side?

Mr. Feehan: You know, it's an excellent idea. I will definitely bring that back to Transportation because, you know, we're trying to explore: how do we get these family members to have access? The process of getting to Fox Lake is so arduous that we eventually had to fly out because we simply ran out of time. We couldn't afford the extra day that it took to get back on a barge, get back on a road, get back to High Level, and then fly home. Your point is well taken, and I will take it up.

Mr. Loewen: Good enough. Thanks a lot. I appreciate it.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Minister, and thanks to your department staff. I know how much work this is. You definitely are passionate about your job and are doing well.

My questions will be mostly local in nature because they're around – you know, I worked closely with the chief of the Horse Lake First Nation, Eugene Horseman. Unfortunately, he's no longer there. He lost last fall.

Mr. Feehan: His sister Ramona is there, though. You should drum up a relationship.

Mr. Drysdale: Yeah. Anyway, I still work there as well with the Métis Nation in Grande Prairie and Angie Crerar in particular. You know, unless something has changed in the last few months, I have met the new chief and worked with her a bit but never talked to her about the issue. But in speaking with Eugene before, Horse Lake has bought a bunch of private land, and they're in the process of trying to buy more. I know they're putting a package together. They said that they were having trouble to get it added to the reserve. Do you support that? Or how do you think that – is that possible, I guess?

Mr. Feehan: You know, there is a possibility of it, but the issue is that this is, really, totally within the federal jurisdiction. They have to go to the federal government and ask permission for additions to reserves. There are strict rules around that. Otherwise, bands would just simply start buying land all around them, and then reserves would grow and grow and grow, and at what point do you stop that? I don't have control over that. But we have been very co-operative whenever a band has said that they want to have an addition to a reserve. They go to the federal government, and they initiate that process. We've always said that we will sit at any table to have those discussions, and if the decision is made for the addition to the reserve, we will facilitate the land transfers when all the conditions have been met. In many ways we are a secondary participant in that kind of a process, not someone they can either initiate that process with nor depend on to be able to enforce it happening.

Mr. Drysdale: Okay. Thanks.

You said earlier that their curriculum is changing in the schools, you know, teaching First Nation children about the past. I might be confused. How does that work? Like, for Horse Lake the Peace Wapiti school division educates their kids in Hythe, and they're integrated into the school. Are they going to separate the children? I might be confused. Maybe you can explain how they're going to do that.

5:40

Mr. Feehan: No. It's an excellent question because it's one of the things we have to consider. What's the best way for people to be educated? Now, two things, I think, you should know about. One of them is that – and I should also make sure I defer much of this answer to the Minister of Education because, you know, it's his line items that are really in question here – you should be aware that with regard to that community in particular, we've had discussions over the last year about the funding. Horse Lake was concerned – and, yeah, I know you know this – about the FNMI money that is being given to the school, so whether it was used or not, and we were able to facilitate some payment being made so that things would be done. We make a requirement that the schools, when they receive those monies, actually use those monies to enhance education that would facilitate the learning needs of the First Nations and Métis children in that school. So there is a process of following up now to say: how have you spent that money, and does it enhance their well-being?

The other thing is that we are also doing a review of the curriculum, and in the event that there is a review of the curriculum, we're not talking about reviewing curriculum that's specifically for First Nations members but, rather, for all children so that it doesn't matter what your family background is; you will be receiving education as to the history and traditions and knowledge of the First Nations people and the Métis people in this province. There won't be a separation in that sense. Of course, even when they do have culturally based learnings and teachings, they frequently invite nonindigenous children into those sessions as well so that there isn't sort of a segregation that occurs.

Mr. Drysdale: Thanks, and thank you for helping resolve that funding issue. It sounds like they've got it mostly resolved. I'd be in trouble with Angie Crerar if I didn't take the opportunity to . . .

Mr. Feehan: Of course. I know where this is going.

Mr. Drysdale: . . . mention the Elder's Caring Shelter. We're running out of time. I can tell her I asked you to support that.

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. No. She is a huge advocate, as you know. She doesn't miss a chance. I have not had a formal meeting, but I have met her five or six times now. Each and every time she either hands me a paper or talks to me about it. You know, we are working very closely with Minister Sigurdson's office to look at the needs in the community in Grande Prairie.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you.

The Chair: Member McPherson, over to you.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Back to the climate leadership initiative . . .

The Chair: Just to clarify, you're going back and forth?

Ms McPherson: Oh, I'm so sorry. Yes, I am. I just assumed.

Back to the climate leadership initiative or the climate leadership program as a whole: do you have any sense of how many indigenous households now have access to reliable electricity or heating as a result of the programs?

Mr. Feehan: We will endeavour, of course, to start to collect those numbers, but I can tell you right now that they're unlikely to be anywhere in the ministry, that we would have the numbers yet, because this was only the very first year of having that climate leadership program. As I mentioned, the 124 programs: some of them are part of the retrofit program, so there are literally, I think, at this point probably at least hundreds of houses that have been applied for, but the grants would only have just been signed off on this year. Processes would only have just been started. Then in the next year we will be able to count and get a sense of those numbers, probably be able to report back at least initial numbers by early next year.

Ms McPherson: Okay. That would be great. Actually, talking about retrofit programs, I seem to recall a similar type of program for indigenous communities, where there would be retrofit things like light bulbs, and I'm wondering if you were able to engage a more local vendor for that activity than for the overall climate leadership program.

Mr. Feehan: When the bands apply for the funding, they have a right to choose the vendor that makes sense for them. Of course, we have a vetting process to ensure that they're getting good quality workmanship and so on, so before we sign off, we make sure that they have people with some experience and so on. But we don't enforce any particular builder, and we do in fact encourage people to, you know, work with your neighbours, work with the other bands who have already used our green employment program to train people how to do things and also use those people who have just learned and come into the community.

Ms McPherson: Good. I'm happy to hear that. Thank you.

Were there any First Nation communities that have identified the climate leadership program or climate in general to be a high priority?

Mr. Feehan: Well, I think the answer to that is a hundred per cent. I mean, not that we had any kind of a poll or anything of that nature. You know, there is not a time that I go into the communities – as you know, I won't repeat myself, but I travel a lot – that they don't talk about how the environment is changing and how it's changing things that they see and witness every day: the hunting, the trapping, the fishing, the berries they pick, the ceremonial plants that they use. They all tell me that we have to do something about it right now.

As a result, as I say, at this meeting we had just last Thursday, there was representation from every area of the province. Members from Treaty 6, from Treaty 8, from both the Blackfoot and the Treaty 4 and Treaty 7, the Metis Settlements General Council, and the MNA were all present in that room, all saying that we need to do something about this. They tell me: you have to pass on an environment to your children, that we've got to do something about it.

Ms McPherson: Right. I'm just going to go off on a little bit of a tangent here. It's not something that's been identified, that I can see specifically in your budget documents, but I want to talk about the Buffalo treaty because I think it's really important. It's certainly a very important cultural document. I know that the government is not one of the signers of the treaty, but in what way does the government support the ongoing development and maintenance of that treaty?

Mr. Feehan: Right. Well, as you know, the treaty is signed between the federal government, the parks, and I can't remember how many nations, but quite a few. Twenty of them or something?

Ms McPherson: Oh, I thought it was 10.

Mr. Feehan: It may be 10. I'm sorry. I just know that I also get spoken to about it by a number of nations. I have met with the writers of the Buffalo treaty and talked to them about the needs and their desire to move not only to having buffalo in the national parks, starting with Banff, but also to move to having buffalo throughout the province. We've been completely open to that conversation. We've been facilitating conversations whenever necessary. We look forward to the day when we can literally say that the buffalo are roaming free.

Ms McPherson: That would be amazing. Just really interestingly, on Catalina Island in California they brought some buffalo over there for a movie, and they've left them there, and they're doing very well.

This is regarding outcome 1.4 in your business plan. What specific priorities from First Nations and Métis women's councils on economic security have been identified for implementation this year? Are there KPIs for that, and is that something that we can be apprised of online or through public information?

Mr. Feehan: I'm afraid that right now we probably don't have an online system that would allow you to simply look at the recommendations and the follow-up with it, although, I mean, there are lots of examples of things that have been brought forward by the First Nations and Métis committees. As a result, you know, there are lots of successes to show you. To be able to actually track the recommendations, there is a report that's done every year, and the government responds to those reports as available. I've just been given lots of lists of the various things that are on that list. But, as you know, we have been working with them to work on a variety of issues: economic issues, physical well-being issues, safety of women issues, and also sort of advancement of women in government as well.

As a result, in the last year, for example, we provided funding for the very first time for the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women. Core funding; excuse me. There has always been some project funding. We've been working with them on things like the Moose Hide campaign. We've also used them to help us understand about how we can get women onto agencies, boards, and commissions. One of the problems is that indigenous women do not brag about themselves enough, so they have real trouble getting through the interview process. We've been learning: how do we change that? How do we either change the interview process so it's not so prejudiced against a different style of being, or how do we help women to get to a point where they can brag about themselves at least for a one-hour interview?

Ms McPherson: I think that speaks to a much larger conversation that has to do with women in general.

Mr. Feehan: Yes, I agree with you.

5:50

Ms McPherson: I take your point that for indigenous women it is a specific way. I would really rather see that the system accommodate the people in order to embrace that diversity rather than insisting that people change who or what they are in order to be able to participate in that system. That leads into this question. In what ways has the

government improved representation of indigenous women on ABCs? Do we have a way to be able to quantify that right now?

Mr. Feehan: I don't have a number I can give you right now, but I can tell you that when I first came into this ministry, one of the questions I asked was: what is the number of indigenous people, not necessarily just indigenous women, on ABCs? The answer was not zero, but it might as well have been. So we've been working very closely with the community to try to enhance representation of First Nations people. There are some successes I can talk about such as a First Nations nurse being on the health board, which spends 40 per cent of our budget, so a very good place for them to be.

But as I mentioned to you, we've also found that we have to learn something more. While we have been working very closely – Michele Jackson, who used to be my chief of staff, is actually the person who organizes all nominations for the agencies, boards, and commissions. She's been in very close contact personally and, of course, through me with many of the nations, asking for people to come forward, meeting with them, kind of teaching them about how to be successful in this process. But we've learned that we're not completely successful in this process. They go to the meetings, and they aren't always successful in getting on the board.

Now, we don't always have control over that because government doesn't always make the decision of who's on the board. Boards have their own internal processes. So we've been working with the boards to learn about how they can increase the number of people on the committees. For example, I went to the AGLC and said: "You don't have First Nations. You have five First Nations casinos, and you don't have a single First Nations person on your board." So they created a separate board, a subboard, where they invited First Nations people to come on. Now, that did not completely satisfy the First Nations people, and I gave them that feedback.

I can tell you, at the very least, that they're doing something now that they were never doing before. They have a subcommittee of people to meet. We continue to push, although I don't have control over AGLC, so I can't force them to do anything. The fact that they created that board is testament to the hard work of particularly Chief Billy Morin at Enoch, by the way, and myself to say: you need to do something more. We're not stopping there because the ultimate solution is that they're actually on the board.

Ms McPherson: Right. Oh, for sure. Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Starke, on to you. You can either go for a full five minutes or back and forth for 10.

Dr. Starke: Well, if it's permissible with the minister, I would like to go back and forth if that works for him.

Mr. Feehan: That works.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Chair. I apologize that I wasn't able to be here for the earlier slot. I was next door with Justice and Solicitor General.

Minister, thank you for being here today and to your departmental officials. I want to share with you that I appreciate your passion for the task that you've been given. I'm sure you are well aware, having seen the magnitude of the challenge ahead of us, that probably, with the possible exception of Mr. Dang, most of us will be dead and buried by the time this problem even comes close to being – I won't even say "resolved" because I don't think that's the right word to use here. But in a long journey you start with simple steps.

I will share with you that when I lived in Germany 17 years ago and made presentations to the Rotary clubs about Canada, if it wasn't

the first question, the second question from German businessmen was about the conditions on First Nations and for our indigenous peoples in Canada. So if anybody doesn't think that it's a black eye for our international reputation as far as past treatment of our indigenous peoples, it is. I would say that it is perhaps the greatest public policy failing of Canada as a nation historically.

With that being said, I'm pleased to see some of the initiatives you've taken. I want to ask a few questions about specifically a couple of initiatives under section 1.3 of your business plan, on page 89, the last two bullets:

- Collaborating with Indigenous governments and organizations, other governments and private and non-profit sectors to address barriers preventing Indigenous Peoples from participating in the economy;

and, finally,

- Collaborating with other ministries, Indigenous organizations, other governments and private and non-profit sectors to enhance the socio-economic well-being of urban Indigenous Peoples through the Urban Initiatives Program.

Now, your colleague the Minister of Culture and Tourism has recently announced an initiative within his department with regard to indigenous tourism. I guess I'm wondering what involvement your ministry has with that initiative and how we are going to measure success. Trust me, I'll be asking him the same question.

Mr. Feehan: Yeah, and that's quite appropriate. Thank you for the question. We, of course, were intimately involved with Minister Miranda at the time that the decision was made. We've had multiple meetings about what they call indigenous tourism. You mentioned Germany. I can tell you that in Germany and Czechoslovakia they actually have more summer camps for indigenous experience than we have in Alberta. People want to go and they want to participate.

Dr. Starke: I can tell you that they're woefully ill informed.

Mr. Feehan: Yes, I know. That's why we'd like to have them here.

Dr. Starke: Yes. Good idea.

Mr. Feehan: We'd like to have First Nations develop them here, so we've been meeting with First Nations communities around what kind of experiences we can have. We've been teaching them about the idea of clusters so that if somebody comes into the community, you have to have not just one event for them to go to but five or six so that they can stay for a few days, go to different events. We've also been talking to them about the idea of having vectors, where they come in and they go to your community, but then there's a natural movement into the next community so that they can travel along and get different experiences. We do have five large groups – you know, no number is completely accurate – five different language groups and so on in this province, and we would like to develop a process where people would be able to come and travel through and see the differences at our public sites but as well as a private enterprise.

Dr. Starke: I think those are fabulous initiatives. I can tell you that, you know, having worked in the tourism field, some 80 to 90 per cent of tourists that come from either Europe or Asia to western Canada expect that an indigenous experience will be part of their overall travel experience. Now, what exactly that means, I think is enhanced beyond a made-in-China doll being bought at a souvenir shop. So I can say that I'm pleased to see that, but if I could maybe offer a couple of words of advice.

Mr. Feehan: Yeah, please.

Dr. Starke: Our northern neighbours, both Yukon and Northwest Territories, I think are farther down this road than we are. They do a better job than what we have done, and I've mentioned this to the minister as well.

I want to shift gears a little bit here to something that may not be completely on the top of your radar screen, Minister, but I heard it on the weekend. Of all places, I heard it on the CBC. As a Progressive Conservative I listen to the CBC. Specifically it's the program *Quirks and Quarks*, and there was a fascinating program that talked about the health effects of the replacement of traditional plants and plant materials that have been traditionally farmed by indigenous peoples in North America by, you know, European crops and that the replacement not only of the planting and the cultivation of these crops but also the consumption of these crops has at least partly contributed to higher levels of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and various other health problems and, in fact, contributed overall, it is felt, to a worsening of the health of our indigenous peoples. Now, I take it from your nodding that you're well aware of this.

Mr. Feehan: I happened to listen to the same program.

Dr. Starke: Well, there you go. You know, you learn something every day even from the CBC. I'm just curious whether what you heard was like it was for me. Did it spark you to saying: "Gee. I need to talk to my colleague the minister of agriculture or to someone else about whether we're doing something about this"?

Mr. Feehan: We actually have had a number of conversations about these kinds of things, but we're at, I would say, a pretty beginning phase of getting the work done.

Dr. Starke: Sure.

Mr. Feehan: I can tell you, for example, that when we were up providing some funding to the elders' home in Fort Chip, they said that one of the problems is that these people have been living on the land, eating nothing but traditional foods, and all of a sudden one day they find themselves in an institution where they eat nothing that they have ever seen before. Now, that might be a slight exaggeration but not too far.

Dr. Starke: I get the same complaint from Ukrainians moved into the Mannville nursing home, but go on.

Mr. Feehan: All right. One of the things we particularly addressed from that meeting with the local community was: is there some way we can adapt health regulations to allow them to bring in local foods? Of course, the problem is that if somebody goes and shoots a moose, are they allowed to just walk up to the seniors' lodge and say, "Here; have a bunch of meat"?

Dr. Starke: No.

Mr. Feehan: Exactly. We're talking with both Seniors and Housing and Health about those kinds of initiatives. How do we make those changes and adaptations?

6:00

I know that there has been a Canada food guide that has been not officially developed but developed that shows how indigenous foods would be appropriate foods within each of the guiding areas. Then we can look at how we make sure that those are more readily available and stop saying to them: you have to buy, you know, bread

products or something else like that that fits our way of doing things. Do it your way, because it turns out that if you eat fish eyeballs, it's like eating a vegetable. I didn't know that until I read the guide. We want to encourage people to go back to traditional foods wherever reasonable because of the link to ongoing health problems.

Dr. Starke: Okay. A final question, Minister. This, again, is a crossministry initiative, but a few years ago there was a program that we piloted at Áísínai'pi, at the Writing-on-Stone provincial park, the aboriginal cultural interpretive mentorship program. Now, it's entirely possible that we should change the title on that, but regardless of what you call it, it was an award-winning program. They won the public policy award. Our two main interpreters that led that picked up the award in Ottawa. It was fabulous. I'm just wondering: are you aware of or what is the level of expansion of that program to other provincial parks? Are you working with your colleague the Minister of Environment and Parks to ensure that within our provincial park system, you know, indigenous employees are being provided the opportunity to tell some of these critical stories that are common not just to Writing-on-Stone but to various other locations in the province?

Mr. Feehan: I have had this conversation with the minister of culture. There have been some difficulties with that program and some of the other programs not continuing on in a successful way because, you know, if you have one person come in and they do a very good job, but then they leave or die, as the case may be, there isn't a good system of bringing in the next person.

We've been talking about: how do we mentor the next generation? How do we get a lot more of the young people involved? The issue there is that young people often don't know the culture, so we need to bring them in and teach them the culture so that they can teach other people. It's a bit complicated, but we are having the conversations.

In a variety of other areas we've been trying to also make sure that indigenous people are there to help us with comanagement agreements. For example, when we designated the Castle park area, one of the agreements we made with the Piikani people was to come in and help comanage. Part of that is the role of things like interpretation – and you're right; the word is not probably the best – explanation of the traditional cultures and practices in the area. It is on the radar. You know, we are just starting this process. I think a lot more needs to be done.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Yup.

On to private members of the government caucus.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you. In dealing with the last question I asked – I don't know whether you remember it or not because of all the questions. I wonder if you could answer that if that's possible.

Mr. Feehan: I'm sorry. You'll have to remind me of the question. I've forgotten.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, what it was was talking about the differences in building relationships with indigenous communities versus – like, in my area I've got groups and organizations, that kind of thing. Can you expand on that? Thank you.

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. Sorry. Thank you for reminding me. You are in a particularly unique area because in Grande Cache, of course,

there are groups that exist only there and nowhere else in the province. The co-ops and the enterprises are a unique structure. They cross the line between Métis and First Nations communities in a way that no other community does. I mean, there are some benefits of that. There is less divide. The negatives are that they don't necessarily have a recognized, distinct group that can be worked with in some ways. You know, if we have a reserve, for example, we can go to the chief and council.

You know that in this case we've been working with the AWN, the Aseniwuche Nation, and we have been essentially treating them as if they were a reserve in many ways. I mean, they receive benefits from our programs. They are deeply involved in the climate leadership initiative, as you may know, and so on. I have been, of course, to the community. I've met with the Mountain Métis, I've met with the AWN, and I've had them both come in to meet with me here. We are trying to find a way forward, but it's a complex issue because they don't fit into the rules of other communities. The federal government does not recognize them as a reserve; therefore, they don't receive the funding from the federal government and therefore don't get all of the services that are necessary.

But through our First Nations development fund and other programs, our aboriginal business investment fund we've been very supportive of some of their businesses, and they've developed some pretty incredible businesses there. I'm sure you know about the mechanics shop and the welding shop that's there and the other services that they provide. As a result, they have built up a multimillion-dollar set of industries, and we are trying to enhance that happening. But it doesn't affect everybody, right? The people who are involved in those things are doing well, but not everybody in the community benefits because they don't have a group that represents everybody in the community, so it doesn't spread out in the community in the way that it does on a reserve, for example. So we're struggling. I do welcome your input, your working with us to figure out a way forward with things.

We expect that things will change significantly with regard to the Mountain Métis and all the Métis in this province because of the Daniels decision that happened federally last year. We are waiting now for the federal government to step up and tell us what they're going to be doing, how they're going to enact the fact that the Daniels decision says that Métis people are aboriginal people under the Constitution. Hopefully, we will be able to work with them to develop structures that will be able to work with all of the Métis but particularly the Métis in your community. Perhaps both the Mountain Métis and the AWN will be able to receive some services in future from the federal government. We would support that.

Mr. Rosendahl: Okay. Thank you.

I'll turn it over now to MLA Woollard.

Ms Woollard: Okay. I was very interested in the discussion there because I've spent some time in the various communities there.

Mr. Feehan: I know that you were there.

Ms Woollard: It's always been a puzzlement to me as to why they're the same but different.

I'll just ask a few quick questions. We don't have much time. I was kind of intrigued with the questions about urban initiatives. In the business plan on page 90 – this is kind of a little bit confusing – the performance measure 1(c) has been changed from the 2017 business plan. The target for 2018 has gone from 15 to 17. I'm just wondering if you could talk a little bit about that.

Mr. Feehan: Well, one of the things you should be aware of is that the number of programs doesn't necessarily represent the value of

the programs themselves, right? So I would not want you to sort of focus on 17 as somehow the right number or that 15 is less than 17. What we're trying to look at is programs or initiatives that will really enhance the well-being of the indigenous people in this province who live in urban settings.

Now, we have committed to this because what we were trying to demonstrate in this addition to our business plan was that we understand that indigenous people do not all live on reserves or on Métis settlements or wherever else, that in fact approximately 50 per cent of all indigenous people live in what we would refer to as urban settings – towns, villages, and cities – and that we need to make sure that we have programs that enhance their well-being.

Now, when I came into this ministry, I could get a hold of anybody on-reserve. I pick up the phone, I call the chief, and they call me back. You know, they tend to do that when the minister calls. So it was very easy for me to say: "Okay. What do you need? How do we enhance life and well-being on-reserve?" Then I realized that that's only 50 per cent of the people I need to represent and I need to serve. How do I do it otherwise? So I met as well with groups who can help me do that. A group was brought together. Actually, MLA Graham Sucha in Calgary-Shaw brought together a number of front-line service agencies in Calgary at St. Mary's University, and we thanked them very much for hosting that for us. My question to them was: "Okay. Where is the starting place? How do I get in touch with the people who live in the urban settings, and what kind of work can we do to enhance their well-being?" As a result, they went away, they had some discussions, and they came back with a proposal for them to set out kind of a protocol for us. Last year we funded them some money to do that project, and just a couple of months ago they returned to me an initial draft idea on how that could work. We will be working with them to enhance that in the future.

6:10

We're going to the communities. In that case, for example, in Calgary they have a women's shelter specifically for indigenous women. Then there was also the Metis Child and Family. There was the friendship centre and a few other organizations. We went to the community and said to the community: you teach us. As a result, they are in that process of figuring it out for themselves.

I can tell you quite proudly that they recently met with the federal minister, Minister Bennett, about three weeks ago, and she said to them: how do I work with the urban indigenous? They proudly pulled out the document they had created for me and said: we've already been working on that. This province is way ahead of the feds in terms of making those kinds of decisions. We are, you know, setting a plan for ourselves in the future which, I think, will teach us what we need to know about enhancing services for indigenous people in urban areas.

Ms Woollard: Well, that's excellent, and that really answers the next couple of questions I had about the increase in the capacity of friendship centres and other supports that are being put into place to address the needs of urban indigenous people.

I know one question I had. As I was hearing recently about a group of people in Edmonton that were worried about losing their kind of seniors' gathering place, a seniors' centre for indigenous people in Edmonton, I was wondering: would that fall under a friendship centre? Do you have support for things like that, or is that a particular . . .

Mr. Feehan: One of the things I always say is that our door is always open. If you as an MLA learn about a particular project – there's no way I could know them all – I welcome you to get in contact with us and to invite us to start a relationship with whatever

group it is so that we can hear and learn what it is that needs to happen.

As you've heard from our conversations today, I see my job as then to identify where in the government we can provide some supports. Do I go to Housing? Do I go to Seniors? Do I go to Infrastructure? I set up meetings very often for groups like that to meet with ministers. I support them in terms of, like we did in Calgary, providing sometimes funding for them to put proposals together, to get their ideas into a workable model, and then we try to facilitate that or enhance that as they move along.

I'd be more than happy to meet with the people that you mentioned and to work with – you know, at the same time we're also working with bands all the time.

Am I stopping? Okay.

Ms Woollard: That's it.

The Chair: Mr. Hanson, back to you.

Mr. Hanson: That's what you get.

Mr. Feehan: Hey, I welcome it.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you. Thank you, Chair. Well, being as Dr. Starke talked about his radio listening, I actually heard something interesting on the radio this morning, too.

Dr. Turner: CBC?

Mr. Hanson: Well, you know, sometimes I switch over to CBC just to avoid the annoying pillow commercials on 630 CHED. It does happen.

Anyway, there is an initiative that Shumka Dancers – they're celebrating 60 years next year. They're doing a performance in conjunction with indigenous dancers this year, so I'm looking forward to maybe partaking, having a look at that. It's in recognition, and they do recognize – I've talked before about how my own grandparents said that when they first came over here, if it wasn't for the help from the First Nations people, a lot of people would have starved to death and frozen to death in this country. We do owe that recognition to them, for sure.

I just want to jump back in. I was just hitting on the geodata mapping before we ran into the buzzer. The whole Daniels decision and the geomapping and the Métis settlements: I think there's going to be a little bit of grey area there with overlapping and the traditional harvesting rights of Métis. Have you looked into that at any depth? Where are we headed with that? Are there going to be some conflicts? How are we going to work through that?

Mr. Feehan: Well, you know, all of these issues are very complex. You know that as well as I do. We have been working with the Métis over the last year on our Métis harvesting policy. It was part of our agreement with the MNA, the Métis Nation of Alberta, in terms of our framework agreement. We've had extensive consultations. Actually, there are some coming up in the next little while, over the next number of days – we can provide you a list of the meeting dates because we invite people to come and talk to us about Métis harvesting – and we will be looking at: how do we make a designation?

Unfortunately, under the previous government, they made decisions about where harvesting would occur without consultation with the indigenous communities, just literally picked a number of communities, drew a circle around them, and said: that's your area. We're trying to do something a little bit more respectful at this particular point.

But we also realize that we need to have a basis on which to make our decisions, so we're working with the communities. We're working with them to help identify what communities are Métis communities because we can identify – here's our big problem, in many ways – that an individual is a Métis person. They can show us their lineage and so on, but how do we identify that a community is a Métis community? That's where the harvesting rights come into effect. You need to be able to say: you know, the Métis have always harvested in this area; therefore, we need to respect that area. Who gets to decide what's a Métis . . .

Mr. Hanson: That may all change because of the Daniels case.

Mr. Feehan: Well, we keep waiting for the federal government to show us their hand on some of those things. It's just been pointed out to me that the Powley decision sort of laid out the criteria for who is an individual Métis, but we haven't had decisions that have helped us with the community thing. There was a decision just last year, I think, the Gowd – I can't remember now . . .

Mr. Hanson: Goss.

Mr. Feehan: Goss. Thank you.

. . . the Goss decision, that started to help us identify what is a Métis community, but it was very limited. Basically, all they said to us is that it has to be more than 20 per cent of the people that have to have – but they also set out other issues, like you have to have a community that existed before relevant control by . . .

Mr. Hanson: Yes.

Mr. Feehan: You know, there has to be a present community, and they have to show a link between the present community and the past community and the families and the people.

Mr. Hanson: It gets very complex, and I understand that. But just for those that don't know, Powley goes back five generations, I believe. To be Powley compliant, yeah, you have to go back . . .

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. It lays out about eight criteria that people need.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. It's pretty strict.

That brings me to another – like, we've talked about this before, and I'd like to bring it up again, the Metis Settlements Act and the list. I believe it was in 1996 that the Metis Settlements Act came out. Was it '96 or '86?

Mr. Young: In 1990.

Mr. Hanson: In 1990. Okay. So about – yeah, we're looking at 27 years ago.

In it it says that the minister will provide a list, the Métis list, right? And it's never ever been done, so that's kind of a sore spot when I'm out talking to folks in the Métis settlements.

Mr. Feehan: Actually, this is news to me, so you're going to have to help me.

Mr. Hanson: Well, it's in there. I'll have to – I think I've talked about it before, and I was supposed to provide it to you.

Mr. Feehan: It's the lands or the individuals, the people?

Mr. Hanson: Individuals, the list of individuals.

Mr. Feehan: Oh, okay. We work extensively on that. There is a process for identifying who is Métis with regard to a settlement.

Mr. Hanson: You've probably had the conversations and the letters sent to you as well, because I get quite a few of them and I see your name CCed on them, that it does cause quite a bit of conflict.

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. Sure. But there is a registrar – right? – and the registrar does identify who is a listed person in each settlement, and the settlements themselves have a right to identify people needing to be added to the list or not. We've been working on that process. There is some concern in the community, but they're split about whether or not individual communities should be able to add somebody to the list, who is or isn't Métis, and so on.

Mr. Hanson: This kind of leads into my next question, then. Under key strategy 2.1 you've got, "Completing the comprehensive renewal of The Government of Alberta's Policy on Consultation with First Nations." Then the next one reads, "Completing the comprehensive renewal of The Government of Alberta's Policy on Consultation with Metis Settlements on Land and Natural Resource Management, 2015, including the exploration of a legislative approach." Now, does that mean that you're considering reopening the Metis Settlements Act and maybe fixing some of these things?

Mr. Feehan: No, it doesn't require opening the Metis Settlements Act. Right now we have a consultation office, the ACO, the aboriginal consultation office, and they have set some policies about how the consultations will occur. A few years back there was a decision to include the Métis settlements in that consultation policy – it was a separate policy but essentially doing the same kind of thing – and when we began the renewal of the First Nations consultation policy, which I addressed a little bit earlier on, we also then spoke to the Metis Settlements General Council. They said that they also wanted a renewal to happen at the same time, so we are conducting them right now. The new policies that I mentioned that will be coming out in draft form in June and final form in the fall are equally as true for the Métis settlements as they are for the First Nations. Once we set up those policies, they will essentially apply in very much the same way to both of those communities.

6:20

Mr. Hanson: Well, that's super, super to hear.

One other thing. Last year we ran into some trouble with funding for the friendship centres, you recall.

Mr. Feehan: Yep.

Mr. Hanson: I think the Alberta government actually released some funds to help them get through the months.

Mr. Feehan: We did.

Mr. Hanson: Are we seeing that same kind of thing happen this year with federal funding?

Mr. Feehan: The issue is the federal funding, as you know. We've always provided a certain amount of funding, but the primary funding for friendship centres comes from the federal government. Unfortunately, a number of years back they decreased their funding to the friendship centres. Right now in our ministry we provide \$894,000. One of the first things I did as minister was to actually increase that by \$100,000, but it doesn't go very far, unfortunately. I mean, there are 20, now 21. Sorry.

Mr. Hanson: It hardly covers the carbon tax. Sorry. I had to.

Mr. Feehan: Well, you know, we have worked very closely with the First Nations to put up solar panels at the friendship centres, and a lot of them are saving a lot of money as a result of the carbon levy. They've been very thankful. In fact, I was in St. Paul, as you probably know, meeting with the friendship centre. If we had not released the funds, they would have had to shut down because of the federal dollars, not because of ours. Because they own that building, a lovely little building, although they're wanting to buy a new one now, they were able, through our carbon leadership initiative, to put up solar panels on those buildings and not only save themselves money in terms of their electrical costs, but if they get big enough, we will be able to help them to be able to drive some income from those kinds of panels in the future.

We have long-term thinking, supported by the carbon levy, that's going to help communities exactly like yours to be able to continue to provide services in the community.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. They were very, very happy to receive that money because, yeah, they were in a desperate situation. They do provide a great service, and it's really sad to see them get into a situation like that because of federal funding.

Quickly, if I can squeeze one more in, business plan, outcome 2, key strategy 2.3, development of a government of Alberta policy or other guiding document for the respectful application of traditional ecological knowledge and traditional land use in Alberta's land-use planning and resource management processes: can you give an overview of what that policy will affect?

Mr. Feehan: Well, I can tell you that the first thing is that that policy is largely being implemented by Environment and Parks. We are making agreements through things such as the lower Athabasca regional plan, LARP, as everybody refers to it, to have traditional ecological knowledge tables where they bring that together and also as part of our comanagement arrangements that we're making, first implemented in the Castle, as I mentioned earlier. But we're also looking at a similar process up in the area where . . .

Mr. Hanson: Well, thank you, Minister.

The Chair: Member McPherson.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Chair. We'll go back and forth.

The Chair: Yes.

Ms McPherson: This has to do with key strategy 1.3, one of the bullets under there, "supporting the improvement of education outcomes for First Nations students in Alberta." On pages 52 to 54 of the government business plan it shows that the government has set targets for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student achievement at 5 to 20 per cent lower than for non-FNMI students. As an example, 84 and a half per cent of non-FNMI students are expected to achieve an acceptable standard on science diploma exams, but the government is only expecting 77 per cent of FNMI students to achieve that standard. How do we reconcile these two things, supporting the improvement of education outcomes but the expectation seeming to be pretty low?

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. There's always that concern that if you set an expectation lower than it would be for any other community, you're short selling. I know that that's a serious concern.

But the reality is that we have a devastating history with First Nations people in this province. We have done lots to ensure that

they are not successful in terms of the type of education that's been provided, the funding of the teachers, the building of the schools, and so on. As a result, we have a long way to go. Now, it would be noble for us to say that by the end of this year the First Nations people will graduate at the same rate or be successful on exams, as you mentioned, at the same rate as nonindigenous people in this province, but it would be completely unrealistic because we are coming from too far behind. So each year they make a decision about what's the next best thing we can do, what's the next incremental improvement that we can achieve.

I would anticipate that – I'm speaking for another ministry, so I can only anticipate; I can't tell you – they would keep raising that bar up until the ultimate goal, which, we have declared, is that there be no difference at all on all measures of well-being for indigenous people as compared to nonindigenous people. So I encourage you to go to the Minister of Education, in this particular case, and ask them about their plans to make sure that First Nations people are successful in communities.

I know we've been putting lots of pressure on the federal government to start increasing the amount of money they're putting into schools because right now they only give about 70 per cent of what we give, on a per-student basis, to the schools. They pay their teachers less, and as a result they tend to get teachers who don't have a lot of experience. They're happy to get a first job, but then as soon as they get some experience, they leave and come back into, you know, major centres, that kind of thing. We really think they need to fund at the same level as this province, and I would love it if all of our parties could get together and say to them that that's the standard. Whatever the province funds, that's what the feds should fund, not some national average, which is essentially what they use right now.

Ms McPherson: There is a school – I'm sorry; I can't tell you what the name of it is right now, but I was reading about it last week – in the southern part of the U.S. It's in Louisiana, with a lot of African-American students. They have such a high rate of their students going on to universities and being accepted into colleges like Harvard and Yale and other Ivy League schools. I would really love to see that we have that kind of a stand for our students from indigenous communities, that we understand that they go to university, not simply that they maintain or they achieve the same as everybody else.

Mr. Feehan: Your point is well taken. I absolutely, a hundred per cent support that we are not trying to find some low standard to meet here. We are trying to find a standard that will be moving on and getting us to the successful place. But I can also tell you that I went to the University of Alberta's round dance a couple of months ago, and I asked them, "What's the number of people that belong to the indigenous community at the University of Alberta?" They told me, "2,500 people."

I can tell you that when I go around and talk to the communities, education is one of their highest priorities. We are working very hard to make sure that it's not just to finish grade 10 or grade 11 or

grade 12 but to get good enough marks to go to university, be successful in university. We put lots of supports into universities to get people there in the first place and then, secondly, to ensure that they get the supports they need. We're seeing some great success now. I like to say to people: you know, I know more indigenous people with PhDs than you probably know people with PhDs. That's a great sign of success and why we support indigenous education in this province.

Ms McPherson: Thank you for that.

This is again to do with outcome 1.4, which is on page 90, supporting the First Nations and Métis women's councils on economic security. It appears from the indigenous.alberta.ca website that the report only comes out every two years. Would that be accurate? Or can you get back to me about that?

Mr. Feehan: Yeah. I'll have to get back because that's not my understanding here. It would typically come out every year.

Ms McPherson: Do you understand, in the budget . . .

Mr. Feehan: Okay. We'll get back to you about it if we're out of time.

Ms McPherson: . . . what part of the budget supports implementation of the accepted but outstanding recommendations from these reports? And is that information public, or will it be made public?

Mr. Feehan: Well, I just want to remind you again that we have a facilitative role, so you don't just look at the budget within Indigenous Relations. If they make a recommendation that's about Justice, then what you should see is that we go to Justice and we say, "This is a really great recommendation; you need to do something about this," and you should see in the Justice budget that they put money into those things to enhance the well-being of indigenous people in the province.

Ms McPherson: But I think, during the budget process, that it's really important for everybody to be able to understand where those specific expenses are so that we can correlate what you're doing with what the spend is and are able to understand: are we getting a return on that budget line item? Is it coming up with the kind of result that was the expectation in the beginning?

Mr. Feehan: Yeah.

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, but I must advise the committee that the time allotted for the item of business has concluded.

I would like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to next meet tomorrow morning, Wednesday, April 4, 2018, at 9 to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance.

Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 6:30 p.m.]

