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Wednesday 28 September 2016

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Mercredi 28 septembre 2016

**Standing Committee on
Estimates**

Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère des Affaires autochtones

Chair: Cheri DiNovo
Clerk: Eric Rennie

Présidente : Cheri DiNovo
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 28 September 2016

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The committee met at 1557 in room 151.

MINISTRY OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Good afternoon. We are now going to resume consideration of vote 2001 of the estimates of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. There is a total of five hours and 53 minutes remaining.

Before we resume consideration of the estimates, if there are any inquiries from the previous meetings that the minister or ministry has responses to, perhaps the information can be distributed by the Clerk at the beginning in order to assist the members with any further questions. Are there any items, Minister?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'd ask the Clerk: Were you able to distribute these to whoever wanted them?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Eric Rennie): Yes. And I do have extra copies as well.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Yes. Thank you, Minister.

When the committee last adjourned, the official opposition was about to begin their 20-minute round of questions. Mr. Miller, the floor is yours.

Mr. Norm Miller: I think I would like to ask about education. It's fairly clear that there's a large gap in terms of the achievement of indigenous students versus non-indigenous students in the province of Ontario. It's been fairly well documented. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Auditor General have looked into this issue and made recommendations to the government. In fact, in March 2016 they reviewed the previous Auditor General's report, and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts put out a report with a list of recommendations.

I wanted to ask about those recommendations, beginning with—the number one recommendation was that “The ministry provide the committee with its most recent results of the aboriginal student achievement gap.” So I'm wondering if you could provide that information.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that. Education is obviously a hugely important issue for First Nation students and their families. Although, the specific details, in answer to your question, I'd have to refer to the Ministry of Education and the Minister of Education, Mitzie Hunter. I can provide a more general background answer for you, to put it in some context, and then, if you want to follow up with the Minister of Education, who

keeps the detailed data and statistics on those issues, we can see what we can do for you there.

You should keep in mind, with respect to on-reserve education, that's the responsibility of the federal government. But Ontario is ready, willing and able to offer our expertise and work with First Nations and the federal government to improve the quality of education for First Nation students on-reserve. We remain committed to working with First Nation communities and the federal government to achieve these common goals of good education for First Nation students. But we also invest in indigenous-specific student achievement strategies across the province. We extend professional development opportunities to give access, support and training for teachers working on-reserve.

Often the question comes up, as you've asked: What are we specifically doing in Ontario to improve indigenous graduation rates? The Ontario aboriginal education strategy was designed to help improve opportunities for aboriginal students, whether they live in remote or urban areas—that is, off-reserve areas. The strategy works closely with parents and communities to encourage increased rates of voluntary self-identification. That's very important because that helps us to better understand the needs of indigenous learners, once we have that self-identification in place.

We also invest in indigenous-specific student achievement strategies across the province. As I said, we extend professional development opportunities and training for teachers who are working on-reserve. Quite specifically, I can tell you that in 2016-17, the total First Nation, Métis and Inuit education supplement of the Grants for Student Needs—that's known as the acronym GSN—is projected to be about \$64 million. That's an increase of over \$7 million. It specifically includes the following investments: an estimated \$1.2 million in base funding for all school boards to establish a lead who would be dedicated to supporting the implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit education policy framework, and a further \$6 million to incorporate voluntary, confidential indigenous student self-identification and to build that into school board action plans and support the educational achievement of indigenous students by going through this exercise of aligning the various funds that are available with the higher incidence of self-identification.

More specifically, even, I can tell you that the Ontario response to the truth and reconciliation report—that's this document. I've said there are two sections in here entitled, "Understanding the legacy of residential schools" and "Closing gaps and removing barriers." Of course, one of the barriers that we have to remove and one of the gaps that we have to close is the educational achievement of First Nations. Those initiatives that I went through the other day at estimates, which are found in the document *The Journey Together*, are part of this ongoing commitment to collaborate on improving social, economic and health outcomes for indigenous peoples. An aspect of getting a good education is to be in a good state of physical health. The idea of "healthy body, healthy mind"—there really is a reality to that.

There are a number of initiatives that are under way across government and at the federal level to address this issue. I can tell you about our on-reserve child and family programs. As I've said, we want to promote healthy child development under the idea of healthy body, healthy mind, but it also spills out into a broader concept of health, and that is healthy families. If you want a child to get up in the morning, go to school and be on their game while they're at school—that is, attentive and taking in the lessons and so on—there's the issue of physical health and there's the issue of mental health. By that I mean the stresses and strains often of growing up in difficult family circumstances. There may be difficult parental issues at home. All of those have to be addressed in a holistic way.

Sometimes the question comes up—you might be interested in this—of why there aren't any First Nations-specific school boards in Ontario. I've been asked that from time to time. I know that's not part of your question, but I thought you might be interested in this.

We are working with the federal government and our First Nations partners to improve the relationship between the provincially funded schools—those are the off-reserves—and the on-reserve schools, which are federally funded. The federal government provides education for First Nation students on-reserve, and it is their responsibility to coordinate second-level education services. While that's the case, Ontario is ready, willing and able to offer our expertise to work with First Nations and the federal government to support on-reserve, assuming the necessary federal funding.

There is an interesting agreement out there, the proposed Ontario/Anishinabek Nation Master Education Framework Agreement. That's going to build on all the parties' commitments in the master education framework agreement that we signed in November 2015. It sets out topics such as standards and expectations for student success, well-being issues, transition issues, curriculum supports and resources and, very importantly, data and information sharing, because for a lot of these decisions on what approach to take to improve the First Nation student outcomes, we need data and information to show where things are working and where things aren't working, in what direction to move and so on. So the data/information piece is huge.

Mr. Norm Miller: And I would agree with you on that. I think that's partly why the public accounts committee made some of their recommendations. I know there have been a lot of programs towards trying to improve the outcomes and the achievement levels for our indigenous students—I'm looking at a list of the various programs. Back in 2005, there was Ontario's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs, a government-wide policy. In 2007, there was Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education policy framework, education-specific policy. In 2007, there was *Building Bridges to Success* for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students—student self-identification.

In 2009, there was *Sound Foundations for the Road Ahead*, the first progress report on the framework. In 2012, there was *Continuing the Journey*, the preliminary report to solicit dialogue. In 2013, there was *A Solid Foundation*, the second progress report on the framework. So there have been a lot of programs put in place.

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I just think that education is so fundamental to improving the lives of indigenous people, to giving them hope to do better, to make more money and to develop skills so they can participate in forestry, mining or whatever activities they choose to do. I really believe it's fundamental, so getting it right is so important.

So that first recommendation of the public accounts committee, "Provide the committee with its most recent results of the ... gap"—do we know whether things are improving in terms of the gap between kids in the general public system versus the indigenous students?

Hon. David Zimmer: The question that you've asked resolves around a public accounts committee audit of the Ministry of Education—what they were doing in terms of First Nations students and so on. That collection of data and information and so on, I guess, is either with the public accounts committee now or it's within the Ministry of Education. I'd have to check with that committee or that ministry.

Mr. Norm Miller: If you don't mind seeing if you could get that from the Ministry of Education. I'm sure you're interested in knowing what the current gap is as well.

Another thing they were recommending, and you were talking about it, was that "The ministry provide the committee with an update on its tripartite agreement discussions." That would, I assume, be between the federal government, provincial government and indigenous communities.

Traditionally, the provinces have been the experts on education, despite education on-reserve being federally funded; really, the province has got all the expertise. Probably, I would think, that expertise could make a real difference in improving education, both on-reserve and for students who are transitioning off-reserve to the public system, thus the recommendation to provide an update on how those discussions are going. Are you aware at all of how discussions between the province, the federal government and indigenous communities are going?

Hon. David Zimmer: Well, I know the discussions are going on, and we do everything we can to encourage those discussions. Sometimes the First Nations ask us to put our oar in and speak to our federal cousins in Ottawa; lots of times the federal cousins come to us and ask us for advice on how to approach the issue. So we do, in our mediating or facilitating role, provide that help and assistance.

Mr. Norm Miller: The committee also recommended that “The ministry provide the committee with a summary of how the various board strategies collected by the ministry are being used to improve educational outcomes for First Nation students transitioning to the provincial education system.” I think it’s important, again, to know whether we’re succeeding, especially for the case of indigenous students who are in a remote First Nation. They might be at Fort Severn and then have to go to high school in Thunder Bay. That’s always a huge challenge, that transition. Making that successful and achieving success for those students is critically important to their success going forward.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Miller, you have just over four minutes.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you very much. It’s going very quickly.

I wonder if you have some comments about that. You don’t have to be too specific, because I know that’s the Ministry of Education that it’s being asked of.

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes, I just wanted to point out that when you say “the ministry,” you’re referring to the Ministry of Education. We’ll see what we can do for you on that.

But with respect to, for instance, the Anishinabek piece, I’m going to ask the deputy. She has some more detailed information for you that you might find of interest.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Sure. Deborah Richardson, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

The agreement between the Anishinabek Nation, Canada and Ontario is actually in the final stages. The Anishinabek Nation is out seeking ratification from their members as we speak. It essentially will be a school board run by the Anishinabek Nation, so secondary-level services. It will be the first First Nations school board in the province.

I wanted to take—

Mr. Norm Miller: Sorry; will that be running schools on-reserve, then?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Yes, but it will create linkages between off-reserve schools as well, so it will be essentially secondary-level services.

But I wanted to speak about the students from the north who do go to school in Thunder Bay or Sioux Lookout. Most of them attend schools actually funded by the federal government that are operated by the Nishnawbe Aski education council. Dennis Franklin Cromarty and Pelican Falls are the two schools where many

students go. So that is actually run by the Nishnawbe Aski Nation education council. Many of the students do.

But you’re right, there is a disconnect. Because what happens is that the federal government provides funding to schools on-reserve at a level that is less than what the provincial government funds, so if you’re a principal running a school, you can imagine running a school at, let’s say, \$6,400 a kid when the Patricia Kenora school board would have, let’s say, \$15,000 a kid. You’re not able to recruit the same level of teachers, you’re not able to have the same supplies, so imagine—

Mr. Norm Miller: And that’s for the schools that are on-reserve?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: On-reserve. So then what happens is that these children—

Mr. Norm Miller: I’ve seen that in the past and always assumed, if anything, that it would cost way more to be running those schools on-reserve than off-reserve.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: That’s right, and they get significantly less. So then what happens is that the children come into the provincial school system and—surprise, surprise—sometimes they don’t do that well because they don’t have the same educational background as others. It’s not in all situations but it is in some situations. So, really, there’s been a push from First Nations leadership for a very long time, and the provincial government has been shoulder to shoulder on this, to have things on an equal playing field, so that schools on-reserve are funded at the same levels as off-reserve.

Mr. Norm Miller: And is the province playing a role in terms of the curriculum and other details, where they really are the experts on it? The federal government doesn’t run much education at all.

Hon. David Zimmer: If you look at page 25 of *The Journey Together*, there’s just a paragraph there. I’ll just read it:

“Classification of First Nation Schools within the Education Act.

“Ontario will explore the possibility of creating a new classification for First Nation/federally operated schools. This could enhance collaboration between the provincially funded education system and First Nation schools to help build a greater capacity (e.g. professional development and learning resources) in First Nation schools.”

The idea here is to get the First Nation on-reserve education system, which is the responsibility of the federal government, up to the same level as the provincial school system off-reserve and, indeed, the school boards in Toronto and so on. There’s no reason why there should be a gap in the quality of education that’s available in the elementary and high schools between on- and off-reserve.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you, Minister. I’m afraid your time is up, Mr. Miller. We move to the third party, Madame Gélinas.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you. I think I will continue on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s recommendations. When I looked at the budget associated with it, I saw that there was about \$200,000 for the

Gladue principle, and I was wondering: What is that \$200,000 going to be used for, more specifically?

Hon. David Zimmer: Just for the benefit of everyone else in the room, the Gladue principle, if you will, is this concept that in the judicial proceeding both the judge and the crown attorney, and indeed the other lawyers involved in the system, when they're dealing with a First Nation offender, should take into account the particular circumstances of First Nation history as a collective piece of history and with respect to the specific person involved in the proceeding, their particular life circumstances leading up to their appearance in court, so—

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm fully familiar with what it means; I'm more interested in the \$200,000.

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Hon. David Zimmer: I'm sorry?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm interested in where the \$200,000 that are referenced in the truth and reconciliation money—they say that \$200,000 will go to the Gladue principle. I just wanted to know what those \$200,000 are going to be used for.

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm going to ask the deputy to give you a more detailed answer on where the various amounts within the \$200,000 are spent.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Good.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Deborah Richardson, deputy minister, indigenous relations and reconciliation.

The idea is to have a summit to look at what the needs are because, typically, what happens is (1) there are not enough Gladue writers, and (2) there's no aftercare. What happens is that the report will be written to support an offender. Then, often, the offender might be struggling with other issues, and it would be better to have somebody with follow-up to make sure to support that offender to follow through on some of those things.

So the whole idea is to have a summit to assess what the next needs are, moving forward. We're actually really lucky on this file, because the assistant deputy attorney general—Kim Murray is her name. She's from Kanasatake; she's Mohawk. She ran Aboriginal Legal Services before coming to the province. She has actually put a lot of thinking into the whole justice component. We're really, really fortunate. She was also the executive director of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Alison, is there anything else that you wanted to add on that? No? That sort of covers it. It's basically that summit to bring together the experts.

Hon. David Zimmer: The deputy has touched on something that I think is very important and is a big, big step in the Ontario justice system. One of the recommendations from Mr. Justice Iacobucci's report—he looked into the whole issue. There was a jury selection issue in Thunder Bay. There were juries selected, and the juries were dealing with First Nation offenders, but there were no First Nation persons on the juries. Justice Iacobucci looked into that, and he had a number of recommendations.

An important one was that the Ministry of the Attorney General should create an assistant deputy minister

position—it would be the assistant deputy minister at the Attorney General's office, aboriginal issues division—who could bring a very special perspective to justice matters that the Ministry of the Attorney General dealt with, and could bring that First Nation perspective.

The deputy minister identified the person who holds that position now. That position, I think, was filled six, seven, eight months ago. That has turned out to be a very good appointment because it gives a unique insight for everybody over at MAG—Ministry of the Attorney General—and all the other ministries too.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Do you have any idea when this summit could be held?

Hon. David Zimmer: It is scheduled here in my notes as November of this year—November 16. It's in the planning process.

M^{me} France Gélinas: And where will it be held?

Hon. David Zimmer: That I'm not sure of, but it is going to be held on November 16. The planning folks—does anybody know where it's scheduled to be held? I don't want to guess, but I expect that it will be probably in the north somewhere. But I can let you know when I find out.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay.

Hon. David Zimmer: These conferences are typically—Thunder Bay is always a favourite jurisdiction, or Ottawa—Toronto sometimes, or North Bay.

M^{me} France Gélinas: All right. My next question—

Hon. David Zimmer: It might be at the new law school at Lakehead University—not “new” law school. That's another interesting piece because the law school at Lakehead University has a mandate, among other things, to concentrate on First Nation issues as they relate to the justice system. The law school has, just this past June, appointed a new dean. It's the first First Nations dean, Angelique EagleWoman, who has taken the position in June. I went up for the announcement in Thunder Bay. I met her a couple of times in Thunder Bay. She has been down to Toronto, meeting with the law society and meeting with us. She also has some very constructive contributions that she's going to make to these issues.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My next question has to do with the overall budget of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. It's about \$80 million. But the truth and reconciliation implementation across the ministry says \$250 million—way bigger. Obviously, it's not all within your ministry, and I fully understand that, but I want to know what role your ministry will play in the disbursement of these funds. Do you have a say in it? Do you guide it? Or does each ministry make their own recommendations with their own knowledge and skills?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm going to have the finance—

M^{me} France Gélinas: The person is back? It's always nice to see you.

Hon. David Zimmer: The number person.

Ms. Esther Laquer: Esther Laquer, acting CEO and director of corporate management for the ministry.

Pardon me, Ms. Gélinas, if you want to just repeat your question for clarity.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes. I understand your total budget is about \$80 million. I also understand that the government has committed \$250 million for truth and reconciliation. I want to know the role that the ministry plays in the disbursement of these funds. Do they go through your ministry? Do you okay them? Do you see them? Do you advise upstream? What is the role?

Ms. Esther Laquer: Understood. Within the \$250 million, which is a span of funding that will cover three fiscal years, each ministry that has programs that are part of the overall strategy will receive their own individual funds. The ministries themselves are individually responsible for developing the programs under the broader oversight of our ministry, specifically ADM Pilla, sitting at the end of the table.

Then, once the program details are finalized, there are opportunities for our ministry to make sure that program delivery details and engagement with First Nations as part of that process are coordinated. So there is oversight from the ministry from an engagement perspective and from a policy adherence perspective, but funding does travel to individual ministries.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Do you know how much money is going to each ministry in which year?

Ms. Esther Laquer: At this point in time, the government is still finalizing the disbursement strategy, as ministries finalize their program development details. Once those have been finalized, I expect that a broader announcement will be made.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Throughout the three years, will you be following up, or is it really that you make sure that the engagement is there upstream and then each ministry flies with their own wings?

Ms. Esther Laquer: Through our fiscal monitoring processes, such as our quarterly reports and our annual business planning process, there will likely be a coordination role for our ministry to monitor ministry progress on how funds disbursement is going, then the overall financial monitoring for government expenditures will look at how the overall initiatives and strategies are progressing.

Hon. David Zimmer: That's the number piece, but there will also be a political oversight piece: We rely on you to tell us where the money is being spent and how much and so forth and so on. But then there's an overarching ministerial involvement to see if the substance—the end game—of the program is being effective or not. Then we make adjustments in the program and then we turn it back to the financial people to keep an eye on the money.

I'm just going to ask Assistant Deputy Minister Pilla to add any comments that you might have on this.

Ms. Alison Pilla: Sure. My name is Alison Pilla. I'm assistant deputy minister for strategic policy and planning in the ministry.

I think Esther has outlined the disbursement-of-funds issue from a policy perspective leading into this process.

We worked together with ministries to think about the recommendations and the calls to action and what the opportunities were for the government in terms of addressing those calls to action.

There was an internal structure set up to work across ministries and that structure continues at various staff working levels from the time of the release of the document until now, and I anticipate that it will continue to occur in terms of our following up with ministries in terms of where they are with their engagement processes, their program design and development.

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We also obviously have lots of opportunities in different venues to hear from indigenous partners, and we can hear back if there are opportunities for ministries to hear more about where they need to make changes or consider that input in their programming design.

M^{me} France Gélinas: So I'm interested in that monitoring—is it quarterly? Who is in charge of it? If there were to be a red flag, who would raise it, especially on the money side?

Ms. Esther Laquer: Typically with large investments like this, there is quite a rigorous monitoring process set up. Normally ministries are required to report quarterly on their expenditures and, at the very least, annually through the annual business planning process where the government would expect to see progress and results: key performance indicators and other outcome-type achievements in direct relation to the investments.

Hon. David Zimmer: The other piece is that I stay in very close contact with my ministerial colleagues at the other ministries—education, health, justice and so on. We talk about what's working and what's not working. Even more important, or just as important: I, as Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliations, stay in very close touch with First Nation leadership, Chiefs of Ontario, grand chiefs, and so on, as does the deputy minister.

The deputy minister has very close relationships with First Nation leadership. We often will hear back from one of the grand chiefs or the chiefs or other First Nation leaders about a program that is really working well or one that needs to be fine-tuned. We then take that substantive piece and I'll sit down with my ministerial colleagues and adjust things and so on.

Then it's back to the financial oversight, the detailed financial oversight of the program spending. Then Assistant Deputy Minister Pilla's shop kicks in, and we'll suggest different ways of doing things or getting in touch with chiefs, grand chiefs and other leaders to see how these things are playing out on the ground. It's one thing for us to sit here at Queen's Park and devise programs and spend money and so on, but what we want to hear is how it's playing out on the ground. By "on the ground," I mean, "How is it playing out in First Nations communities?"

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, that will kind of open the door to my next question. It starts with Grand Chief Isadore Day, of Chiefs of Ontario, who said in a statement, in reaction to the throne speech:

“This throne speech was a critical opportunity to communicate that improving the socio-economic outcomes of First Nations is vital to the overall Ontario economy.... This was not heard today.

“Next year’s budget cannot be balanced on the backs of First Nations—we’ve seen the increase in poverty and despair ... that remains in place despite political promises.”

Given what you’ve just told me, that when you hear from chiefs—and I mean, it’s not just a chief; he is Grand Chief Isadore Day—

Hon. David Zimmer: Regional Chief.

M^{me} France Gélinas: When he makes comments like that, what kind of discussions did you have with which one of your colleagues?

Hon. David Zimmer: Well, Grand Chief—sorry, Regional Chief Day and I have been working very closely since he became the regional chief and indeed before that. I talk to Regional Chief Day all the time, on a weekly basis—sometimes several times a week. We interact at various meetings throughout the province and, indeed, on occasion, nationally.

M^{me} France Gélinas: So what did you do after you heard his reaction to the throne speech?

Hon. David Zimmer: I’m getting there, okay? The point is that we have a relationship. We have a very frank relationship, and he will call me personally. He calls the deputy minister personally. He’s in and out of your office as often as he is in and out of my office. So the regional chief expressed his comments with respect to the throne speech, and we have sat down and we are taking his reaction into account.

We are also taking other reactions into account that have suggested things that we’re doing well, things that we can do better. But the point is that we’ve got the relationships in place, and they are candid relationships. You have no idea how frankly—and I mean that in a positive sense, in the best sense of the word—all the chiefs, the grand chiefs and other leaders within the First Nations community feel that they can speak to me and to the deputy and to the assistant deputies.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Madame Gélinas, you have three minutes left.

Hon. David Zimmer: I’m going to ask the deputy minister to give you her reaction to the relationship with Regional Chief Day and, indeed, the other First Nations leadership, when they raise an issue with us.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I’m not that interested in the relationship you have. I’m more interested as to: What actions did you take?

Hon. David Zimmer: Well, the first step to taking action is to—the throne speech is, what, two weeks old, I think? Two weeks old. Regional Chief Day has raised some issues. We have been sitting down in the last week and a half or so and having conversations. We will get to a good place on this.

Deputy, do you want to add anything?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: There have been a lot of announcements since February. Having worked very

closely with Regional Chief Day and other indigenous leaders in the province, whether it’s on the northern First Nations Health Action Plan, working closely with Grand Chief Fiddler and Grand Chief Solomon; or The Journey Together, which was collective with everybody; and then Walking Together, which is the long-term strategy to end violence against indigenous women and girls, which was across government, I think now we really are in a big implementation mode. You rightfully pointed out that it’s a lot of money. We need to make sure there are performance measures in place, there’s accountability in place on all those different pieces—and ultimately make sure that it makes a difference on the ground for people and families. So that’s the big focus.

But the other, bigger piece—and it wasn’t part of The Journey Together—is also the resource-revenue sharing and having conversations and figuring out what the path forward is for that. We have a lot of different conversations that are under way, whether it’s climate change—or supporting other ministries on facilitating those conversations. So there’s still a very big agenda. Our mandate laid out all the things that we’ve done, and going forward.

In terms of Regional Chief Day’s comments on the speech from the throne, I can’t specifically comment on that, because I have not had a conversation with him about his views on that.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I’m afraid you’ve got about 10 seconds left to wrap up.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I’ll keep them for later.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Okay. Moving on to the government side: Ms. Kiwala.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Madam Chair. The first thing I would like to focus on today is the various initiatives that we, as a government, have brought forward for indigenous youth.

Before I begin, I do want to make a comment, for the public record, on how pleased I was that I had the opportunity to be appointed as your parliamentary assistant, as well as to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I think that that double appointment is indicative of the interest that our Premier and our government has in those two subject areas. I think that that is an important thing to note.

But I just wanted to refer to some statistics, some of which have already been mentioned. I think that there are a number of statistics that we should be talking about. Most of the statistics mentioned will be from the Stats Canada 2011 national household survey.

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Approximately 34% of indigenous people in Ontario are under the age of 20. This was something that was certainly notable in the three trips that I have made now to indigenous communities in Northern Ontario. That compares to 24% of the non-indigenous population. The national household survey also reports that roughly 30% of the indigenous population in Ontario does not have a certificate, diploma or degree. I do believe, however, that there has been a bit of an improvement in that rate between 2006 and 2011, which is a positive thing. The

high school completion rate for on-reserve indigenous people from the ages of 15 to 24 years old is 30%, compared to 50% of the off-reserve indigenous population.

Indigenous youth are—and this is something that’s well documented and mentioned in numerous places in this Legislature—one of the fastest-growing population groups in Ontario. Yet—and this has already been addressed by MPP Miller—there are significant outcome and achievement gaps. We know that closing those gaps is critical, and it’s a very necessary step that we need to take and that we are very serious about.

Improving the outcomes for indigenous youth can lead to greater sustainability of the health and social service systems; it will reduce the overall need for care throughout their lifetimes and will contribute positively to Ontario’s overall socio-economic state. I know that this is a priority for you, Minister, and I know that it’s a priority for our government and the Premier.

We have been talking about—I’m pleased to see that The Journey Together is being explored at some length in this committee; I think it’s an excellent document. We announced, through that document, better outcomes for indigenous youth and initiatives to support that and family well-being, and also to expand life promotion and explore crisis support systems.

Minister, you’ve said yourself that there’s no reason why there should be a gap between on- and off-reserve indigenous groups with respect to education. This is certainly something that I’m also anxious to see worked on. I’m glad to see the direction that we are going in. They are all good steps.

I also understand that our government supports Right to Play. When I was in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, this was something that was very, very much discussed with many of the different groups, in particular the indigenous groups that were involved in the planning of the Pan and Parapan Am Games. There was a lot of support for that initiative. I think that we need to continue to help create those opportunities for indigenous youth to participate in sport and recreation activities, which will improve their overall health and fitness. Today, Right to Play runs the PLAY Program in about 50 First Nations communities across Ontario, which is fantastic. It’s a remarkable increase since it first started with the pilot projects in Moose Cree First Nation and Sandy Lake First Nation back in 2010. It was certainly something where you could see a difference in the community when you’re driving through these communities and seeing playgrounds and places for children to play and just be children doing normal things that children do. It was certainly very refreshing to see in some of those communities.

Specifically, I’m wondering if you can tell the committee what steps Ontario is taking to support initiatives focused on improving outcomes for indigenous children and youth. You’ve elaborated on some of them already, but I’m wondering if there are other features or initiatives that you can add to the discussion today on that.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you very much for that question. You’re quite right. It’s not by accident that the

parliamentary assistant, MPP Kiwala, serves as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

We see such a link with what we are doing on First Nation issues, especially as it relates to children and youth, that we wanted to have a really direct tie-in to what goes on at the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and Member Kiwala serves as that bridge. She’s very busy. Some days she’s doing Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation work and later the same day or the next day she’s doing children and youth services work.

Before you got into politics, I know you had a background in that area, not only in Ontario and Canada but in other parts of the world. I think in Africa and France, I believe—

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Turkey and France.

Hon. David Zimmer: Turkey—an extensive background in that, so it serves us well.

If I turn to page 20 of The Journey Together—that’s Ontario’s response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. Keep in mind that the truth and reconciliation report was released about a year ago, and it took the province about six months to get this document ready. That’s how keen we were as a province and as a ministry to respond to the TRC report.

The TRC report says at page 3 of volume 4, with respect to children and youth, “The legacy of the schools continues to this day. It is reflected in the significant educational, income and health disparities between aboriginal people and other Canadians—disparities that condemn many aboriginal people to shorter, poorer and more troubled lives.”

Then, on the page opposite, is the Ontario response under the closing the gap piece. It’s not by mistake that the first thing you see there is the reference that Ms. Kiwala just made to the population demographics in bold numbers: 42% of the indigenous population is under 24 years old. The source for that is the national household survey in 2011. That’s five years ago. If anything, the percentage is even higher.

When we share that demographic with people, they’re surprised—taken aback—that the First Nation youth population is the leading demographic. It cries out for action for all the right substantive reasons, but it cries out for immediate action just because of the demographics, and of course because it’s the right thing to do.

What I want to do is tell you quite specifically about some of the actions we’re taking. There is a fund called the Youth Opportunities Fund. It’s an example where Ontario is investing in really meaningful opportunities for indigenous youth to help them succeed. There are a number of indigenous-specific programs that were funded and announced in April 2016. That’s almost the same time this document was released. I just want to walk you through a number of them with the specific dollar amounts and what they do.

For instance, Six Nations Polytechnic—and I don’t know if any of you have had a chance to go over and visit

the Six Nations Polytechnic, but it is a model of what a first-class education polytechnic should look like. It has joint programs within the polytechnic. It has joint programs with McMaster University, and I believe it's working on some joint programs with the University of Waterloo, but I stand to be corrected on that piece.

Six Nations Polytechnic—I was over there a while ago with Minister Moridi when he was Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. We announced \$900,000 over four years to systematize opportunities for indigenous education and learning for First Nation youth by launching youth ambassador models for First Nation youth ages 13 through 24. The idea there was to strengthen cultural resilience, cultural identity and self-confidence. Six Nations Polytechnic is one of the places where they are teaching First Nation languages. I believe it's Ojibway and Cree?

1650

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Also the Mohawk languages.

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes, and Mohawk languages.

There is another program where we've put in \$210,000 over three years, to engage young people, for instance, to design and maintain greenhouse structures. That's within the Anishinabek community in the north.

At the Fort Albany youth council, through the Fort Albany First Nation, \$210,000 over three years for empowerment workshops, life skills training, camp retreats and various other supports for indigenous youth in Fort Albany First Nation. That initiative is particularly structured to increase the confidence and the self-esteem, because what we have found going into some of these schools and dealing with some of the young students is that if they're lacking in self-esteem, it translates into a lack of self-confidence and a reluctance or sometimes even an inability to really benefit from what's on offer in terms of the curricula.

There is another program that's being handled through the MoCreebec youth council, the MoCreebec First Nation. That program is entitled Regaining Cultural Identity. We've got \$140,000 over two years to quite formally implement a youth council in the community of MoCreebec First Nation and create a number of other opportunities for youth in meaningful ways.

With respect to Sachigo Lake Healing Centre, there's a program, Regaining Cultural Identity. We've got \$210,000 over three years to provide various supports and, really importantly, mentorships. Mentorships are so important. Role models are important to young people, wherever they are. If there are the right role models in place, a child or a 12-year-old or a high school student can attach to a mentor—"I want to be like that person." That's a very good thing to happen. Frankly, within the education system there has been a shortage of available mentors. We have found that the mentorship program is hugely successful.

There's a program entitled Under the Husk. That's operated through the Onake Corp. That's \$400,000 over two years to expand something called a "rites of passage

initiative" for the Haudenosaunee youth who are facing particular challenges, in order to provide year-round support, skill-building and community-connecting in Akwesasne. We'll share that initiative with other Haudenosaunee communities across Ontario.

There is a program that's operated through the Aboriginal Sport and Wellness Council of Ontario: \$70,000 for one year to provide access—and this one is really quite important. It sort of ties into a question I took in the House this morning. There was an announcement this past number of months at the city of Toronto, at York University and over in Hamilton with McMaster University on the North American Indigenous Games. I think I referenced that there would be 14 sports and many First Nations participating in it. But the Aboriginal Sport and Wellness Council—\$70,000 over a year to provide professional sports and fitness training to athletically inclined First Nation youth in remote and underserved communities. That's the challenge: How do you provide specific, very skilled sport training models in the remote communities? Well, this program is entitled to fund that.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Minister, you have about three minutes left.

Hon. David Zimmer: Through the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres—and I spoke about that the other day. There are about 30 around Ontario in cities small and large.

There's the Native Youth Sexual Health Network. They're getting \$400,000 over four years. They're going to work with indigenous youth to mentor young leaders and create sustainable resources, and provide information about personal health, community health and all of those things that are available in the urban centres around sexual health and so on.

With respect to the Inuit community, they're receiving \$210,000 over three years. They're going to create a space for Inuit youth here in Toronto to learn more about Inuk identity.

I'll stop there.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): You have two minutes left.

Hon. David Zimmer: Well, I don't want to put MPP Kiwala on the spot, but I will just thank her once again for serving as the PA to double ministries. She's busier than you can imagine.

With respect, I'll just come back to Gladue. You asked; I said it was in November. I now have the latest information. It's going to be November 28 to November 30 in Thunder Bay. There will be, so far, 100 members of the justice sector in attendance. So that's under way. As we flesh out the detailed agenda, and speakers and so on, I assume that will be available on a website somewhere. But it's November 28 to 30, Thunder Bay; 100 justice sector workers dealing with the Gladue issue.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): We now move to the official opposition: Mr. Miller.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to start from your book, *The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation* with

Indigenous Peoples. On page 13, you talk about creating a culturally relevant and responsive justice system: “We will improve the justice system for indigenous people by closing service gaps and ensuring the development and availability of community-led restorative justice programs.”

Last December, I had an opportunity to tour the Thunder Bay jail. First of all, my impression of the jail was that the jail itself should be closed. It kind of feels like you’re going back about 100 years when you actually tour the facility. The week before they had a lockdown with a very serious incident at the jail itself, but in touring it, certainly my impression of it was—as I say, my first reaction was that it should be closed. I couldn’t believe that something like that exists in the province of Ontario. It’s very overcrowded.

My other impression was, and I don’t know the exact percentage, but I would guess at least 80% of the people incarcerated in that facility were indigenous people. Obviously, indigenous people are greatly overrepresented in the justice system. I assume that’s why this bullet point is here. If you could talk about how, over time, that might change for the benefit of all, I would appreciate it.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you very much for that question. As you know, Mr. Miller, there were a number of questions in the House directed to Minister Naqvi when he was the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, some of those specific to the Thunder Bay situation. There have now been some questions going to Minister Oraziatti, who is the new Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

1700

I appreciate your comments about the situation in the Thunder Bay detention centre, as does Minister Oraziatti. I would specifically direct you to speak to Minister Oraziatti about the detailed plan to address the situation in the Thunder Bay detention centre. I know it has come up in question period a number of times.

Having said that, let me say that the Ontario government is taking a number of steps to address overrepresentation of indigenous people in the criminal court system. Here are some examples. The Ontario Aboriginal Court Worker Program provides critical court worker services in 49 criminal and family courts specifically to help indigenous persons navigate the justice system. One of the ideas is, if at all possible, you want to keep a person out of a detention centre in the first place. So that’s one initiative, and then—

Mr. Norm Miller: I would say that’s the most important—

Hon. David Zimmer: That’s the most important; it’s part two. Unfortunately, if one does end up in detention, you want it to be in a satisfactory facility. Minister Oraziatti will be addressing that issue.

The Ministry of the Attorney General is going to expand the Aboriginal Court Worker Program that I just referenced a few minutes ago. That expansion of the program is going to start later this year, 2016, and on into 2017.

I want to make it clear that the application of the Gladue principles in all Ontario courts, whether they’re in the south, the east, the west or the north, is important in addressing this issue of the overrepresentation of indigenous persons in the criminal justice system. So it’s back to the comment that you just made a minute or so ago, Mr. Miller, that the most important thing or the place to start is keeping people out of the justice system. If they do find themselves in the justice system, find some way to keep them out of the detention facilities and, God forbid, if they end up in a detention facility, that it is a reasonable facility. So it’s three-pronged.

Mr. Norm Miller: For those who might not know what the Gladue principles are, could you explain that, please?

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes. I think I touched on that in answer to a question from MPP Gélinas.

The Gladue principle—I’ll simplify it a bit—says to the justice system, be it the judge or the crown attorney or indeed the defence lawyers and everybody involved in the system, that when you are dealing with an indigenous person, either the decision to investigate, the decision to proceed with an investigation and lay a charge, if you will—if the charge is laid, the indigenous person ends up in the court system and the court system has to deal with it and the court system has to dispose of the case.

Across that spectrum, the justice system is supposed to take into account the special history and circumstances that indigenous peoples have faced over the last two centuries as a collective, and then also look at the specific circumstances of that individual who is right there in the body of the court or in the justice system somehow, to look at their particular circumstances and keep that in mind when the case is being dealt with.

I’m not saying that people are treated differentially. Justice is blind, as they say. Having said that, the background of an accused person or persons in the justice system has to be taken into account. That same background is taken into account when non-indigenous persons are in the justice system, but it’s particularly important when an indigenous person finds themselves caught up in the justice system. That’s the Gladue principle. And it’s a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada; a case wound its way through the system, and the Supreme Court of Canada issued that decision. Under our principles and laws, *stare decisis* and so on, the courts and the justice system are bound to the fallout. So that’s why we are making an investment over the three years that I referenced earlier to increase the number of Gladue report-writers and Gladue aftercare workers.

How this system actually works: An indigenous person is caught up in the system—and a Gladue report-writer is someone who will sit down and, if you will, look into the circumstances of that person caught up in the justice system and write an objective report. The person writing the report is a person who is knowledgeable, skilled, sensitive, objective and all of those things. They will write a report, which is presented to the judge and the lawyers and so on. Then a decision is taken on how to dispose of the case.

The other important thing is that there's something called a Gladue aftercare worker. Often, the court will have some idea of how to deal with the person before the court. It's not just enough to say, "Okay, this is the decision, so go off and do this or do that"; they need some follow-up, some close mentoring. The aftercare worker keeps an eye on the person after they leave the justice system to make sure that the recommendations or the decision on how to dispose of the case are followed up on, so the person is not sort of abandoned.

Over at the Ministry of the Attorney General, they're doing a pilot on indigenous bail and a remand program. The Attorney General's ministry is doing that in eight communities in Ontario. The idea here is to provide alternatives to remanding an accused into custody and to help reduce breaches of bail conditions.

Somebody is caught up in the justice system and the case is going to take a while to be disposed of. If we can keep the person out of jail, pending suitable bail and other things, so they're not ending up in the Thunder Bay facility, that's good. Then, part of that program is, if a person is released, you don't want the individual to fall into a situation where they find themselves in breach of their bail conditions and they're back in the system, and it's a revolving wheel. We have a plan to follow up with these individuals to help ensure that they don't breach those bail conditions and end up back in the system.

We're also providing some additional funding to Ontario's—in Ontario, there are now nine indigenous community justice programs. We're going to increase access to pre-charge and post-charge diversion programs and a restorative justice program. Not all reasons for someone ending up in a court—be they indigenous, be they not indigenous, but particularly indigenous persons who end up in a court system—require the full hammer of the law, so to speak. There are other ways to deal with these situations, particularly with younger offenders.

The Ministry of the Attorney General is also exploring new approaches for collaboration by working with various indigenous organizations, leadership and their communities to revitalize and reclaim indigenous laws, because a lot of these matters that the individuals find themselves in front of the court on can be dealt with—there's a rich tradition of indigenous law, if you will. Long before western Europeans were here, indigenous communities, First Nations, had a way of dealing with people in the First Nation who had issues. There are a number of lessons to be learned from that traditional knowledge and that traditional approach. The same way that, on environmental issues, we look into the traditional ecological knowledge of First Nations, we should also look into traditional knowledge in the way First Nations have dealt with a lot of these lesser offences and so on.

1710

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm sure part of the root of the problem as to why a lot of indigenous people end up on the wrong side of the law is because of, especially in some of the remote reserves, the drug, alcohol and substance abuse that is rampant in a lot of those commu-

ities. Does your ministry, with other ministries—I would assume maybe the Ministry of Health—try to deal with that epidemic, especially in many of the very remote indigenous communities?

Hon. David Zimmer: We do what we can to address this issue, but a lot of these on-reserve issues that you've just referenced, with respect to drugs and so on, are a federal responsibility. But, having said that, over the course of the last number of days, I've walked you through a number of programs that Ontario provides both on-reserve and off-reserve in working with our federal partner to get to the root causes. A lot of these programs come through the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and so on.

I can tell you that First Nation leadership takes these issues very, very seriously. I have, every time I've talked with leadership of a First Nation, be it the chief or the grand chief or other community leaders—this is an issue that they have stepped up to the plate on in the sense of, if it is a problem—and it is not a problem in all First Nations. So let us not make categorical, sweeping statements. Like any other community, there are more or less—it can be an issue in some and not others.

But let me tell you—

Mr. Norm Miller: Sorry. Some of the ones that are prescription drugs—I'm no expert on it, but I hear a lot about fentanyl these days, or oxycodone a year or two ago. Is there a provincial role in terms of how they are regulated?

Hon. David Zimmer: The Minister of Health, Minister Hoskins, is very concerned about this prescription drug issue in Ontario, and he's concerned about off-reserve and on-reserve. It's an issue across the province that needs addressing. I'm just going to make my comments deal with the First Nation aspect of it, to the extent that it becomes an issue for First Nations.

Let me tell you an anecdote that will demonstrate how seriously—

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Miller, you have four minutes left.

Hon. David Zimmer: Four minutes—how seriously First Nation leadership takes this issue and wants to work with their First Nations members. They want to work with the province; they want to work with the federal government; they want to work with the health people; they want to work with the justice people to deal with this.

About a year and a half ago, I was at a remote fly-in, way up—I won't name the First Nation, but it was way up. We got off our plane and started to go off to our meeting, and another small plane landed just behind us, one of these eight-seater, nine-seater or 10-seater things. As the people got off the plane, there was an elder at the foot of the steps with a couple of younger community members, and they checked the carry-off luggage of people getting off the plane. They were looking for alcohol and drugs. I saw with my own eyes the elder directing the younger persons with him, "Check this. Check that. Check that." I saw with my own eyes stuff

recovered that the First Nation did not want on the First Nation. That's how seriously they take it.

So with the involvement of the First Nation leadership of the respective communities in partnership with my ministry and in partnership with the other ministries—health and justice and so on—and the federal government, we are tackling this issue, as we are attacking the issue in other parts of Ontario.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Two minutes.

Mr. Norm Miller: Okay. There won't be time to deal with this issue, but it's related. Mental health issues and the suicide crisis that was happening on some of the remote First Nations: Does the ministry have a response to that terrible situation?

Hon. David Zimmer: It's particularly endemic with young First Nation members. The First Nation leadership recognize this is an issue, we recognize that it's an issue and the youth themselves recognize that it's an issue.

An interesting thing happened a couple of months ago. We sat down with an organization of First Nation youth. They asked us to stop using the reference “suicide prevention.” They didn't like the word “suicide,” and I'd never thought of that. They said, “We use the word ‘suicide’ and it gets out there and people think suicide,” and then there's copycat stuff and so forth and so on. They said, “Would you please”—and this was an insight from the young people themselves—“not use the expression ‘suicide prevention?’ Let's use the expression ‘life promotion.’ Put it on a positive basis.”

I thought about that afterwards. When you sit down and you talk about suicide and you keep using the word “suicide,” the weight of it just drags you down. On the other hand, if you sit down with those same persons and talk about life promotion, it's kind of an elevating conversation. It leads to ambitious undertakings and so on. I was very touched by that insight.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Miller, your time is up. We now move to the third party. Madame Gélinas.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you.

Interjection.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It's her time now, Minister.

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes. Would you mind if I took about a 90-second break?

M^{me} France Gélinas: You need a break break? Yes, we can break.

Hon. David Zimmer: I just want to—well, I don't want to get into details.

Laughter.

Interjection: Please don't.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): We'll take a five-minute break. We'll recess for five minutes and come back.

The committee recessed from 1718 to 1723.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I hope everyone is refreshed. We will now go to Madame Gélinas, third party.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I think that was a very good idea, and everyone appreciated it. Thank you.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My first question is a question that I have talked about before, and it has to do with the Métis Nation. You remember that there has been this report that was done to find people of Métis heritage in my neck of the woods, mainly around the French River and Sturgeon Falls areas. The people of francophone heritage were really worried that the study that was done only looked at anglophone families that had aboriginal heritage. I was told at the time that that was just the first part of the report and that the second part of the report would be looking at both. So my first question is: Where is that at?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm going to ask Assistant Deputy Minister Alison Pilla to answer your question. She has particular responsibility or oversight or knowledge of that issue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Perfect.

Ms. Alison Pilla: Alison Pilla, ADM for strategic policy. I'm actually going to say on that one, I'm going to—we've been doing some work with the Métis Nation of Ontario, using published reports that are already there around history and genealogy and looking into activities that were going on across Ontario that might help shed some light on where Métis communities are and where they've been historically. So we've been engaged in some of that work across the province.

A lot of that original work was done around the time of the Supreme Court case around Powley. We're using that as a first step to look at the history across the province and, as I said, where we can determine that there are historic Métis communities.

On that particular issue, around which particular families were part of the research, I'm going to have to get back to you, because I don't have the details of the individual reports with me. But we can do that.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Has your ministry undergone any research of their own, or do they really do literature reviews of what already exists? Have you done any of your own research?

Ms. Alison Pilla: It's a bit of a mixed bag on that one. As I said, there's a lot of public information that was generated as part of the court case around Powley, so we've relied on that extensively for some of the areas in the province. In some other areas, there was less information available that we could rely on, or we've made some determinations that there were gaps in the historical research.

We have, in a couple of instances, commissioned some research. We don't have the right kinds of resources in the ministry to actually undertake the historical research ourselves, but we have worked in a couple of areas to commission some research to fill in the gaps in our knowledge. We did some work with the federal government around the Mattawa area in terms of research there, and we're currently looking to do some work just around the Saugeen area as well. That work is at a very

preliminary stage, so we certainly haven't, by any means, completed that yet; we're just at the start of that process.

Mostly we've relied on what was there. We've done the occasional outreach to get some extra historical information.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The work that was done by the federal government around the Mattawa area—is this work that is available, as in, can you share that with us?

Ms. Alison Pilla: It's pretty detailed historical research and that actually wasn't done in my area, so—

Hon. David Zimmer: The federal government did that research, so you might want to raise that issue with your federal counterpart up your way, Charlie Angus.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was just curious to see what was shared with the provincial government because of the understanding that your ministry has with the Métis Nation.

Hon. David Zimmer: I can tell you that I've had a few meetings now—I think three or four—with the new president of the Métis Nation of Ontario, Margaret Froh. In fact, just last week was the annual meeting of the Métis Nation of Ontario's president and their other senior leadership with me, in my capacity of Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and the Premier.

1730

This issue of Métis identification, if you will, is high on Margaret Froh's agenda, as it was with former president Gary Lipinski. But largely it's an issue that the criteria are something that Métis Nation of Ontario internally is working on. It's sort of a matrix that they want—someone who is deciding whether they're Métis or not, or fit the definition. But we are working—

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm not interested in the definition at this point. I'm interested in: What is the historical data that exists that people can gain access to through the provincial government?

Hon. David Zimmer: What I think you should do—it's a view, but I would give Métis Nation of Ontario President Margaret Froh's office a call because they are working very hard on gathering this information and working up a matrix to deal with this.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have no problem working with the Métis Nation of Ontario, but I'm more interested in knowing if there's any resource that the provincial government has available that they can share with me.

Interjection.

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm sorry, no. All that information essentially resides in the custody and control and the offices of the Métis Nation of Ontario. But I am sure that—while I can't speak for her—I'd be surprised if President Froh did not want to share that information.

Alison?

Ms. Alison Pilla: I'm Alison Pilla, ADM. I've got a clarification. I just wasn't sure what the status of that report is. The Mattawa report is public. It's actually published on the MNO website, staff is telling me. You can go there and find that research report.

M^{me} France Gélinas: What is it called?

Ms. Alison Pilla: It's done by a group called Stonecircle; that was the researcher. So it's Stonecircle research on Mattawa. I don't have the exact title, but we can get that for you. I'm sure it's pretty accessible on the website.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you.

Hon. David Zimmer: The MNO does have a very good website, for obvious reasons: because they want to reach out to Métis throughout Ontario.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Is there any intention from your ministry to undertake further historical research, specifically about francophones in that area?

Hon. David Zimmer: No. We leave that exercise, if you will, to the Métis Nation of Ontario. They have their approach and their sense of what they're looking for in the information. Of course, we will support them however we reasonably can in that pursuit. But that activity, if you will, is done internally by the Métis Nation of Ontario.

M^{me} France Gélinas: So the provincial government never does work in that area?

Hon. David Zimmer: No, the Métis Nation of Ontario.

Ms. Alison Pilla: I'll just clarify. That piece of work was outsourced, but it was funded by the federal and the provincial government together. The Métis Nation was part of the group that determined how to help structure that research. They had to do the outsourcing on that. We were involved to that extent, but as I said, we're not the ones actually going out and doing the research. Of course, we help set the parameters for that research. My understanding was that that was fairly comprehensive research. It was to look for the existence of Métis families historically in that area. It wasn't restricted, as I understand it—it wasn't my area at the time—to Métis families who were part-English and part-indigenous, at the time. It was to look at Métis communities more generally and to look at where they were on the land and what they were doing and how they had formed a community at the time.

But my understanding is that it wasn't restricted. It may have been influenced by the particular types of people who were on the land at the time. It's not my understanding that there were any restrictions there.

Hon. David Zimmer: The bigger point here is that this exercise is led in-house, if you will, by the Métis Nation of Ontario. We try to be as constructive as we can in whatever help that we can provide, but the initiative and the drive and so on comes from the Métis nation.

M^{me} France Gélinas: But paid for by the federal and provincial governments?

Hon. David Zimmer: For the Mattawa piece.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay. Just to let you know, there is discontent about this report coming from my area, mainly because the influence of the federal government was to really take a Canadian look. Basically, they looked at a lot of Scottish-heritage and English-heritage families who settled in that area, to the exclusion of francophone families who did not cross boundaries into

further west or east. I was just putting it on your radar that there is discontent out there with this report.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you. I've heard that.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad that you've heard it. I'm hoping that it will lead to action, and the action that they're hoping for is that you will provide the financing, the same way you did for Mattawa, to look at more of the French-heritage Métis—not as much in Mattawa but more towards Sturgeon Falls and the French River area.

Hon. David Zimmer: Of course, the issue becomes even more pointed, if you will, following the recent Daniels decision. Within the Métis nation, there is a huge interest in this issue. In my experience, once there is a big interest in an issue, things tend to happen.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Good. Would your ministry be open, if MNO came forward, to look at funding? Are there resources within your ministry to fund that piece of research that seems to be missing?

Hon. David Zimmer: That's a conversation I know that President Margaret Froh wants to engage on. One of my responsibilities is to build the relationships and reach out and understand and work with, in this case, the Métis Nation of Ontario. I look forward to that conversation with President Froh. I'm sure she has some ideas that she wants to pursue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay. I'm moving on to something that is unrelated, but I wanted to make sure that I got an answer before moving on.

First of all, I really like your change of name. I think this is a good decision in the right direction. I was just wondering: How much did it cost to do a name change for your ministry?

Hon. David Zimmer: I got new business cards, so I suppose that cost something. But this is an answer that our financial person has got right down to the penny. My business cards—I'm just making it up—cost \$9.86. I just made that up. But go ahead.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Let's see if she concurs.

Laughter.

Ms. Esther Laquer: Probably not to the penny. What I can tell you is that costs were very minimal. Costs would cover things like changing the signage, so that the public and guests can find our offices, and changing all the electronic templates that the ministry uses to correspond to the new name changes. Staff, of course, particularly senior executives, would need to update their business cards, which is all done through our shared services, again, in a very cost-effective way; the government prints its own business cards.

So that's the extent of the costs associated with the name change. I don't have the exact figure with me but I think it's probably safe to say it was under \$25,000.

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Hon. David Zimmer: And that includes the name change on my office door.

Ms. Esther Laquer: Correct.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Madame Gélinas, you have four minutes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Wow, it goes by fast. Okay, my next question has to do with land claims and settlements. In the estimates for 2016-17, it says that your ministry will be collaborating with the elected band council and Haldimand county on developing an economic plan for the formerly contested Douglas Creek Estates that would provide a one-window approach to Six Nations access in business.

How much has been set aside—I'm interested in money again—for this, how much has been spent for this to happen, and how much has been done?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'll give a more general answer afterwards, but the specific numbers in the estimates—go ahead.

Ms. Esther Laquer: Funding for projects related to the Six Nations community are funded through our Six Nations community negotiations fund. For the 2016-17 fiscal year, the ministry has allocated \$3.2 million. It's anticipated that costs related to that proposal would be funded through there.

M^{me} France Gélinas: How much does this one-window approach project, if you want to call it—how much will that cost?

Ms. Esther Laquer: I'm going to let ADM Batise speak to specific project-level details.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay.

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes, Assistant Deputy Minister Shawn Batise. He's with the negotiations branch. He's right into this issue.

Mr. Shawn Batise: Right into it. Thank you. Assistant Deputy Ministry Shawn Batise from MIRR. On the costing of the one-window approach, we're not that far advanced yet. We've still got to flesh out many details to work with the elected councilmen through the community initiatives branch at MIRR. Once we have that information, we'll make it available through CIB.

M^{me} France Gélinas: How far along are you in those negotiations toward the one-window?

Mr. Shawn Batise: I would say we've had some very preliminary discussions with the elected council at this point in time. There are a couple of other priority issues that we're working through at this point in time. Also, as you may or may not be aware, the elected chief and council do have an election coming up in mid-November, so the Ontario government has an effect on their ability to do business going forward. Things are stalled somewhat at the moment.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The province also reached an agreement on the related Avalon property claim earlier this year, similar to Douglas Creek with the Six Nations. What has the government committed to this claim, to this settlement, money-wise?

Hon. David Zimmer: Sorry, ask me that question again.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Avalon properties, the settlement—how much?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm not sure what you're referencing. Just give us a second.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Avalon properties.

Hon. David Zimmer: Does it have another name?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It doesn't ring a bell with anybody?

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I wonder—we're almost out of time—if the minister and staff could maybe get back to you on that, Madame Gélinas?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sure.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): We're just at time.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): We now move to the government side: Ms. Kiwala.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm going to continue my line of questioning about children and youth, and I'm going to jump right in without preamble, you'll be pleased to hear, or some might be pleased to hear. I'm wondering if you can give us an update on the current status of the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy.

Hon. David Zimmer: That's a very important question. Indigenous partners were instrumental in the co-development of the policy—again, I want to emphasize “instrumental in the co-development of the policy,” because so many things have happened in the past where it has been top-down. We are trying to make it a bottom-up, or a level playing field. This is the important news here.

As you know, your ministry, MCYS, has engaged a little over 400 participants. Those participants varied from community members, service providers, front-line staff and other representatives from about 150 indigenous agencies and organizations that provide various supports for indigenous youth, and children and their families. I believe, as of April 2015, that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services has also engaged another 500 communities from across Ontario.

As you know, in the winter of 2015, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services hosted a leadership round table with indigenous partners, where partners reviewed the strategy—a great conversation about the strategy—and then, I'm happy to say, endorsed the strategy. Again, it was a bottom-up exercise, if you will, so we got the best possible strategy developed from people who actually know what's going on, on the ground.

Indigenous partners continue to be actively involved in the first phase of the implementation of that strategy that I've just referenced. There is a special focus on transforming the way that the services themselves are designed—so we have the design of the service and then we have the delivery of the service. After they do their very good work on designing the services, then the strategy moves into how that service that they've just worked through the design piece on should be delivered, and then, how that strategy should govern, affect, influence or oversee indigenous children, youth and their families.

We worked very hard across government, your ministry, the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and other relevant ministries, to build this—and I want to emphasize again—community-driven strategy. We wanted to make sure that it was integrated, that it was

culturally grounded and that it really provides practical, effective—and that the services that it provides would have a long-term effect. Again, I come back to my point: What better way to find out what should go into a strategy than hearing from the people on the ground?

The implementation of the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy necessarily involves a number of proposed legislative changes, which we have to do upstairs here, to the Child and Family Services Act. On April 7, 2015, the Report on the 2015 Review of the Child and Family Services Act was released. At that time, Minister MacCharles signalled her ministry's intention to consider updates to the Child and Family Services Act to respond to the review and to support the transformative work that was under way in the child and youth sector, including the OICYS piece of it.

So your ministry, as you know, continues to review and examine these programs and policy areas with a view to considering really immediate—not long-term improvements, but immediate improvements—to very specific ministry programs that'll work to align the work of the strategy with what is actually going on on the ground, and it aligns the strategy with the necessary legislative changes to the act. One thing we don't want is for the strategy to end up on a shelf. After we've designed and figured out how to deliver it, we'll make the necessary legislative changes to effect it and then keep a very close eye on: What are the immediate steps we can take? What can we do today, next month and a couple of months down the road?

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On January 16—and this is a very important piece of the question on the strategy—the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that First Nations children and families living on-reserve and in the Yukon are discriminated against by Canada in the provision of family and child services. Here in Ontario, we welcomed that decision. We respect the findings and the ruling of the tribunal regarding the government of Canada's funding and the provision of child welfare services on-reserve. That Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision involved the provision of on-reserve services.

I'm getting into what the federal government is doing here, but they're responsible for on-reserve, although we have a common interest and indeed we work together wherever we can. I'm proud to say that Ontario and my ministry and your ministry often act as a prod or a conscience sitting on the federal government's shoulder to get them moving along on these issues. Minister Bennett, the new Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, is very interested in these issues for all the right reasons. I meet with her regularly on these.

Where the rubber hits the pavement, so to speak: The 2016 federal budget announced an investment of \$634 million over five years to support—and this is the key to the piece—the immediate needs of First Nation children and to begin right away a process of reform to strengthen First Nation child and family services. So we are very encouraged—my ministry—and I know you're very

encouraged at your ministry by the federal government's response to the decision of the tribunal and by the federal government's commitment to work with indigenous partners as well as provinces and territories. There's a mechanism in place called the federal, provincial, territorial forum—

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Indigenous.

Hon. David Zimmer: Indigenous forum—the Federal, Provincial, Territorial and Indigenous Forum has been set up. On behalf of the other provinces and the territories, Minister Bennett and I are co-chairs of that forum. That forum is going to serve as a place where we can discuss these issues cross-country: best lessons; best practices; things they're doing in other provinces, other territories; advice to the federal government; and hearing about initiatives of the federal government. So it's a holistic approach to a range of issues that we can deal with at that forum. I can tell you that at that forum—we're interested in a range of issues, but there is a particular interest in children and youth issues on this.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Excellent. I think I have a bit of time left. We've got about six minutes or so left in this room. I have a million things I want to ask you, but I'm really obliged to stay focused right now on children and youth because of my double mandate.

I'm wondering if you can elaborate on how we are supporting the Right to Play's Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth—that specific program and what the outcomes are for indigenous youth.

Hon. David Zimmer: I always enjoy talking about Right to Play. I think it's one of the great initiatives that we should all be aware of.

Let me take you back to the winter of 2009. My ministry was directed to develop an initiative that would focus on expanding recreational opportunities for indigenous youth through partnerships in the public sector, the private sector and the not-for-profit sector. As a result of all of that, the Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth Program was developed. It was developed by Right to Play, but in partnership with the province, other organizations and indigenous organizations.

The Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth Program works very hard to help indigenous youth improve their health, their self-esteem and their leadership skills through consistent, weekly and year-round participation in sports and activities. It's not just a thing of, "Oh, we're going to run a hockey tournament next Saturday," or "We're going to run a baseball tournament some Sunday afternoon." It's a long-range, planned-out program.

The reason it has this long perspective, if you will, this long outlook, is because of the discipline of learning a sport or a physical activity. Practising to be a good hockey player, practising to be a good badminton player or practising to be a good swimmer requires discipline. It requires concentration. You've got to organize your day. You've got to organize in your mind how you're going to approach this skill set.

We have found, at Right to Play—and I've talked to sport psychologists and I've talked to others involved in this issue: the self-confidence that you see on a youth's face when they've mastered an athletic skill. Once they've mastered it, then you start seeing them getting better and better and better at it. The confidence that it creates is touching to see. But the confidence, then, that they could master that skill set on a long-term basis and learn something—what the confidence does is create further ambition: "If I can master this physical activity or that physical activity, and I can see myself getting better and better at it"—the confidence that it builds tells them, "Maybe I can also undertake a course of studies in school, I can get my homework done and I can graduate next year. I know I can do this because"—

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Minister, you have just over a minute to wrap up.

Hon. David Zimmer: So for any of you who want to see really good news and an inspiring story, go and Google "Right to Play" and "indigenous communities" and see all the good news that comes up.

I will tell you an interesting story. We had a Right to Play event on Manitoulin Island. We had a philanthropist who donated a serious chunk of money to build a hockey arena. We all went up, and the philanthropist arranged to have a hockey star by the name of Wendel Clark come. So I went, and the philanthropist went, and we arrived at this arena and the ribbon-cutting ceremony. I gave a little speech, and the kids just watched. The philanthropist gave a little speech, and the kids just watched; ditto for the chief. Then Wendel Clark stood up, and this place just broke up and went nuts, and the kids just rushed him. They all wanted to be like Wendel Clark. You could just see the expressions on their faces. Then he put on a pair of skates and played hockey with them, and they had a role model, they had a mentor.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: That's great. Wonderful.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you all.

This committee stands adjourned until next Tuesday at 9 a.m.

The committee adjourned at 1800.

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