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Wednesday 25 November 2015

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Mercredi 25 novembre 2015

**Standing Committee on
Estimates**

Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère des Affaires autochtones

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 25 November 2015

Mercredi 25 novembre 2015

The committee met at 1606 in room 151.

MINISTRY OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Good afternoon. The committee is about to begin consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs for a total of 15 hours.

I would like to remind everyone that the purpose of the estimates committee is for members of the Legislature to determine if the government is spending money appropriately, wisely and effectively in the delivery of the services intended.

I would also like to remind everyone that the estimates process has always worked well with a give-and-take approach. On one hand, members of the committee take care to keep their questions relevant to the estimates of the ministry. The ministry, for its part, demonstrates openness in providing information requested by the committee.

As Chair, I will allow members to ask a wide range of questions pertaining to the estimates before the committee to ensure they are confident the ministry will spend those dollars appropriately. In the past, members have asked questions about the delivery of similar programs in previous fiscal years, about the policy framework that supports a ministry approach to a problem or service delivery, or about the competence of a ministry to spend the money wisely and efficiently. However, it must be noted that the onus is on the member asking the question to make the questioning relevant to the estimates under consideration.

The ministry is required to monitor the proceedings for any questions or issues that the ministry undertakes to address. I trust that the deputy minister has made arrangements to have the hearings closely monitored with respect to questions raised so that the ministry can respond accordingly. If you wish, you may, at the end of your appearance, verify the questions and issues being tracked by the research officer.

Any questions before we start?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: No.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): No? I believe there's a motion to be made. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, just on a point of order, Chair. I have something else I have to attend, and I would ask, after the ministry does its presentation, that we switch the

order between the Conservatives and New Democrats, which we've agreed to.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Is everybody okay with that? Okay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you. Much appreciated.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): All right. We start now with the ministry, so it's your turn to go. You have 30 minutes.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Good afternoon. Ni'n teluisi Deborah Richardson. My name is Deborah Richardson and I'm a member of the Pabineau First Nation in New Brunswick. I'm the deputy minister here. I have on my right Alison Pilla, who's assistant deputy minister of the strategic policy branch; I have Paula Reid, who's our CAO; and I have David Didluck, who's the assistant deputy minister of negotiations and land claims.

Firstly, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional territory of—many indigenous nations have resided in this area over the years, but specifically the Mississaugas of the New Credit.

Minister Zimmer does send his regrets as he's unable to be here today. I was just kind of alluding—it's a big day and a big week for us. The week is called Leaders in the Legislature, where all of the chiefs are in town and they meet with a number of ministers, including the Premier and the Deputy Premier, over the course of a couple of days.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And members of the opposition, too.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: And members of the opposition—they're meeting with everybody, so it's a big deal.

Right now, as we speak, there is a youth symposium over at the Eaton Chelsea and then there will be a broader relationship table a little bit after that I hope to make, depending on how we do here.

Really, it's great to be able to brag a little bit about the ministry that I am the deputy of. Part of the job in the portfolio that we have is meeting with indigenous groups across the province and meeting with leaders and organizations, understanding what their concerns are, and supporting them in manoeuvring. Sometimes they need to be connected with industry, sometimes they need to be connected with other ministries, and sometimes with the federal government, so a lot of what we do is that.

We also celebrate achievements and build long-lasting and productive relationships. What stronger motivations

can there be to build and strengthen those relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit—because aboriginal people include three categories of groups, as defined by the Constitution, which are First Nations, Inuit and Métis. In the province, Inuit are more located in urban settings and, predominantly, a larger population in Ottawa and in Toronto. Métis live throughout the whole province, and there are over 133 First Nations in the province, so they're located everywhere, from probably all the areas that each of you represent.

It's amazing to see how far our ministry's rather small budget, which I must add—this is estimates—is 0.001% of the government's total budget—I wish it was more, but it's not. And it goes across the diverse aboriginal community in Ontario.

In addition, there is quite a large urban aboriginal population that resides in the province of Ontario, and, in fact, in a previous life I used to run the Friendship Centre here in Toronto. There are over 70,000 aboriginal people who live in this city. You kind of get lost in the cloud of the cultural mosaic that we live in, but it's quite fascinating, actually.

MAA and the partner ministries that we work with have strong mandates from the Premier to ensure that the respective ministries and aboriginal affairs work closely with aboriginal people to provide them with greater opportunities to participate in the workforce, the economy and reaching their potential. It was funny; yesterday, the Premier addressed the chiefs, and they commended her on the mandate letter and she commended the federal government, and the chiefs said, "Well, actually, you got the mandate letter idea from us." People were laughing. It really does have a bit of a road map for people to follow.

Across government, we are taking action to close gaps in health, education, justice, housing and more. I am really appreciative of those partner ministries to move the yardstick forward effectively and as quickly as possible because everybody in this room—it doesn't matter where you're from; if you're from the north or from the south, or if you're in an urban setting, or you're familiar with First Nations communities—we need to change. We need to reset the table and change what's happening right now in this country, and in this province specifically.

The success of aboriginal people in Ontario is critical to Ontario's competitive edge. So, again, while the budget is small and its growth is restrained, like others in government, we are challenging ourselves to improve our own effectiveness and efficiency measures to better define longer-term outcomes.

Much has been accomplished in reconciling relationships, all of which moves us toward our overall goal of the ministry which, when you look at our website, is working toward improving the lives of aboriginal people—First Nations, Inuit and Métis people—in this province.

I'd like to share a few specifics about what we actually do and what we've achieved. This past August, we signed a political accord which was the first in decades with First Nations partners. This accord builds on the State-

ment of Political Relationship signed by the then NDP government in 1991 to improve relationships. What's really interesting is that Grand Chief Gord Peters, who was the one who actually—I was sitting across the table, and Alison, negotiating with him. He was the one who had negotiated the first one, so he really had that vision and wanted to—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The statement on political relations?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Yes, he negotiated that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wow. I was there, and I don't remember that.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: He negotiated with Bob Rae. So that was his vision, to be able to have that, because he felt that that's the broader vision, and then it's something to work toward for First Nations. It was an important step in the ongoing revitalization of First Nations' communities in achieving real progress. Most of all, it's an opportunity to move forward in a spirit of respectful coexistence and make a real difference in the lives of indigenous peoples across the province, and to start building a better future for everyone's children and grandchildren.

It was actually quite the honour to be at the signing ceremony with all of the Political Confederacy. For those of you who don't know, the Political Confederacy is the regional chiefs and the grand chiefs and then a number of the larger, independent communities. They are representative of the leadership. We were able to sign the accord with Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day, joining Minister Zimmer and the Premier. Actually, it was lovely, because a lot of other ministers and deputy ministers were able to attend, and some other chiefs.

The accord recognizes First Nations' inherent right to self-government and commits the parties to joint discussions on common priorities. Those common priorities include the treaty relationship, resource benefits and revenue sharing, and jurisdictional matters involving First Nations and Ontario. Discussions on jurisdiction and self-government are aimed at finding practical ways to implement these concepts that create real opportunities for First Nations and will help move this province forward.

Over the coming months, Ontario will also be looking for opportunities for meaningful partnerships and arrangements with other aboriginal groups and communities that lead to improved outcomes for our children and grandchildren. Myself, I'm the mother of five First Nations children and I'm very interested in making sure that my children have a really good future and know who they are in terms of their own identity.

Ontario's growth really depends on renewing that historical partnership that we have with First Nations and Métis communities. By renewing that partnership, we'll all have a better understanding of the role treaties played in our shared history. As the Premier said in August, we all need to understand that "when this relationship is not respected or when the trust is broken, the consequences are painful and long-lasting."

I just came from a lunch with Justice Murray Sinclair at Humber College. The work that he has done around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission I think resonates with all Canadians regardless of political party or alliance or regardless of background. I will speak to that a little bit as we get into that.

I'd like to take a few moments to talk about our treaty strategy. The relationship set through the political accord will facilitate the engagement and joint work to be done under the treaty strategy that was announced in the 2014 budget. Actually, for your information, Mr. Bisson, we are signing an MOU tomorrow with the communities that you represent in the James Bay, the Mushkegowuk.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, I talked to some of the chiefs.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Yes, so it's really exciting.

This strategy is about creating a broader understanding, not only within government but across Ontario, that treaties matter. Ontario is unique in Canada for the number and variety of treaties, with 46 treaties and land purchases covering the province. They are relevant today and not just agreements in the past. Treaties are the foundation of the development of this country. They created rights and responsibilities for Canada, Ontario and for First Nations.

Last year, the government committed to a treaty strategy that promotes constructive engagement with First Nations communities, now embodied in the new political accord, on areas of mutual priority. It commits to developing an education and public awareness campaign on treaty and aboriginal rights. I do have to add—well, I live in Nipissing First Nation and in Thornhill—my one daughter is in grade 8 and people in her class did not know that there are still First Nations people in Canada. This is grade 8, so we have to do something. I want my kid to be able to go to school and know that other people see her—just like they're learning about other groups too. But the first peoples of this land, people need to know who they are. The treaty strategy also helps facilitate meaningful relationships with aboriginal communities by creating a common language and approach to revitalizing the treaty relationship.

I'm pretty proud of the stuff that we do at aboriginal affairs. Anyone who doesn't know, First Nations and aboriginal groups are very active on social media—very active—and part of it is because, when you're living in remote communities, that's how people connect. Last year, we launched the social media campaign #TreatyON, which has created a wide interest and a buzz on Twitter and Facebook.

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We've also supported and promoted treaty awareness initiatives created by partners, including the city of Thunder Bay's Walk a Mile Film Project and the Anishinabek Nation's We Are All Treaty People teachers' kit. It's awesome. The Anishinabek Nation actually created a wampum belt that's made out of Lego, but there's a curriculum that's attached to it. So kids are able—it's actually harder than it looks—to put together this Lego, and there's a whole curriculum. The Union of

Ontario Indians, or Anishinabek Nation, didn't realize the demand. Teachers are willing to pay the money and are looking for it because they're looking for tools in their toolbox to educate their classrooms.

The Ministry of Education is revising the provincial curriculum to include treaty requirements for students to learn about indigenous cultures and histories, including—which I think is very, very important—residential schools and rights and responsibilities as treaty people. To support the updated school curriculum, our ministry also developed and distributed more than 11,000 First Nations and treaties maps of Ontario.

As we gain a greater understanding of our shared history, we are also assessing the recommendations delivered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the TRC. In government, we have to resort to acronyms at some point. The commission released its executive summary and Calls to Action in June, and over the course of the closing ceremonies, Canadians bore witness to a dark period in our history, all of our history: a history that went unacknowledged for more than a century and which many of us are only now coming to grips with. Using the language of the 21st century, the commissioners, the Premier, Minister Zimmer, our chief justice and so many others exposed this dark chapter to generations of Canadians who were ignorant of this colonial past and the legacy of state-sanctioned abuse and assimilation.

Those closing ceremonies—for any of you who watched or even read the newspaper; it was so moving—and the commission's concluding statements and reading of the Calls to Action and the recommendations were very painful. But the commission's report and the spotlight it continues to shine on our painful shared history also represents an opportunity for all of us—all of us in this room, anyone that we meet—to make a real difference in the lives of people, to teach a new generation about our past and show how, working together, we can move forward in a spirit of reconciliation.

So, just as we're updating the school curriculum to teach students about treaties, we're also making instruction on residential schools mandatory—a key recommendation that was made by the commission.

Taking action on the commission's recommendations is a very important priority for Premier Wynne and Minister Zimmer. I'm really encouraged by the federal government's leadership and commitment in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, not only as a deputy minister, but as an indigenous person in this country. It makes me really proud when I see people making this a priority. Average citizens will just approach me, as the deputy of aboriginal affairs—and people want to do something. They don't know what it is, but they want to do something. There's a lot of goodwill out there, and we just have to capitalize on that goodwill.

We're working, right now, across governments to review what people can do and what people plan on doing, both from a policy and a pragmatic perspective, and understand how we can act upon these within the government ourselves.

Premier Wynne committed the government to work with partners on actions that respond to the commission's recommendations. Those conversations will continue this week as part of the Leaders in the Legislature, which we were speaking about. A lot of you are meeting with chiefs to have those discussions.

We're committed to pursuing reconciliation from a perspective that honours survivors, encourages critical thinking and teaches an understanding of both the short- and long-term consequences of residential schools.

I'd like to take a moment to speak about—one of the things that the commission's work talked about was the abuse suffered by aboriginal children at residential schools that may have ended, but too many aboriginal women and girls in particular continue to be at risk with the higher rates of violence and abuse. The circumstances may be different and the perpetrators may be different, but we must apply the lessons learned from residential schools and use the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to guide those efforts that we take to eliminate violence against aboriginal women and girls.

The Ontario government is really pleased with the new federal government's position calling for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. I notice that all parties, federally, have taken that position, even the Conservatives, when their position before wasn't that. The minister, Carolyn Bennett, is looking at meeting with families and trying to shape what that route is and what the inquiry is, based on the feedback she hears, and really understanding the roots and finding solutions to this ongoing tragedy.

We'll continue to support the indigenous communities and partners that we partner with on this. We actually have a group with the Ontario Women's Directorate called the joint working group. It's comprised of representatives from the Chiefs of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, the Ontario Native Women's Association, the Métis Nation of Ontario and some independent First Nations. It's a joint working group where we work together on these issues. It's actually really unique, in terms of the province; I think BC has looked at replicating something like it. We have 10 ministries that also sit at that table.

We continue to develop a long-term prevention strategy and some other specific initiatives, such as awareness, that we hope will someday support a national strategy. We're also actively involved in the national framework for coordinated action to end violence against aboriginal women and girls and the Draft Justice Framework to Address Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Girls. The first national round table was held in Ottawa this past February. Ontario supported 10 proposed actions that we jointly developed with the aboriginal partners we work with, and we tabled that at the round table.

Land claims are also a large part of the business that the ministry undertakes. We've made significant progress in strengthening relationships through resolving claims and doing some more quickly. We've met its public

commitment to reach a decision on new land claims within three years, on receipt of a complete land claim submission. Ontario's number of claims is 67. We had eight in research and assessment, 50 in negotiations and nine settlement agreements being implemented. I just want to share a couple of quick updates on that.

Since 2003, Ontario has settled 20 land claims and land-related matters involving the transfer of 58,604 acres of land to Canada, to be added to First Nation reserves, and compensation packages totalling \$615 million.

In March 2014, Ontario, Canada and Pic Mobert First Nation initialled the final agreement pursuant to the 1991 Land and Larger Land Base Framework Agreement. The final agreement has been signed, and planning will begin soon for a tripartite celebration involving the federal government—there was a bit of a hiatus when in election mode.

In January of this year, Ontario and the Chapleau Ojibwe First Nation initialled the final agreement for the First Nation Treaty Land Entitlement under the terms of Treaty 9. This agreement was implemented fully in April 2015.

A proposal for the transfer of the Burtch lands to a community-based corporation to be set up on behalf of the community by the Six Nations Elected Council was supported, and the decision to move forward within that transfer has been made, transferring it to the community of Six Nations at large.

The Algonquin—those of you who have been around a long time probably know quite a bit about the Algonquin. Its most exciting work is done. These tripartite negotiations involve Canada, Ontario and the Algonquins of Ontario, all working together to achieve a negotiated settlement that will produce Ontario's first modern-day constitutionally protected treaty.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Bob Rae tied himself to a tree there.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: What?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Bob Rae tied himself to a tree there.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Really? I love to hear all this history. It's so odd; so many people have so many gems of stories.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's a whole other story.

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Ms. Deborah Richardson: You'll have to tell me about it after, please. I love it.

This June, a new milestone was reached—which was really, really exciting—when the negotiators for Canada, Ontario and the Algonquins of Ontario initialled a proposed agreement in principle, an AIP, for the Algonquin land claim. While this agreement in principle is not legally binding, it is a key step towards the negotiation of a final agreement that would take the form of Ontario's first modern-day treaty.

During the course of this Algonquin land claim negotiation regarding the agreement in principle, an unprecedented amount of information has been provided to the

public. There's been a lot of interest, a lot of questions. Ontario has engaged in extensive consultations to improve public understanding of the negotiation process and the proposed elements of an agreement. Input received has helped enhance the negotiators' understanding of the public and stakeholder interest.

The ultimate goal of these negotiations is to reach a final agreement, which will balance the rights of all concerned and open up new economic development opportunities for the benefit of the Algonquins and their neighbours in eastern Ontario.

Minister Zimmer did ask that I convey his personal appreciation of MPP Vic Fedeli's and MPP Norm Miller's efforts on this file. On behalf of their constituents, these members made very valuable contributions as a part of the consultation process, and for this, he thanks them.

There are several years of work ahead on this file, with many opportunities for public consultation and input before a final agreement will be reached. Ontario really looks forward to moving forward on this.

Another element of Ontario's reconciliation efforts is our work with aboriginal communities and entrepreneurs to promote new economic opportunities. An early initiative was the launch of the New Relationship Fund—this goes back to 2008. Since that time, we've invested over \$111 million to help close to 200 First Nations and Métis communities and organizations to engage in consultation activities with governments and industry in resource-based economic development opportunities and provide increased economic development and skills training opportunities.

There was also, in 2014, the launch of an Aboriginal Economic Development Fund, funding over \$25 million over three years. The fund supports aboriginal communities in the development and implementation of long-term economic strategies, contributing to diversification and strengthening the treaty relationship. It also addresses key barriers by providing grants and loans for aboriginal businesses, and funds province-wide and regional projects that help access to financing and skills training.

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

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Five minutes. Thank you.

We might dive into some of the questions, but maybe through questions, I might be able to respond to some of these things. Just to highlight, we do provide some capacity for research and data collection on economic development to the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. We also support the Métis Voyageur Development Fund and a number of other projects to support communities in development efforts with industry.

We also provide core capacity, which is really, really important because these communities are inundated with piles of EAs and inquiries, so having a core person has been really, really important for those communities that are overwhelmed with initiatives.

We also launched a provincial Aboriginal Procurement Program earlier last year. It makes it easier for aboriginal

businesses to access government procurement opportunities.

Children and youth—I would like to touch on this. I know I have five minutes. We are committed to working with all children across this province, but specifically First Nations, Métis and Inuit children, to get the best start in life. We do support the Ministry of Children and Youth Services in building the Aboriginal Children and Youth Strategy, which is a really comprehensive engagement strategy, working with all partners.

Also, a number of ministries—something that I'm really proud of that I worked on when Brad Duguid was the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs was the Right to Play initiative, where Right to Play is in a number of communities across this province, providing leadership skills and life skills through sport and other activities. More than 4,500 children and youth have participated in these programs. Hearing anecdotal examples from a principal in Moose Factory, where there was vandalism before the program, and all of a sudden, now that the program is in place, the kids having something to do is really great and really exciting.

We also continue our work through the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, through the Feathers of Hope forum and recommendations proposed by the youth. It's a great example. Feathers of Hope is through the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, which is up in the north. Also, the Intergovernmental Network on Nishnawbe Aski Children and Youth is coming together to really understand what the unique challenges of the north are for youth living in the north.

I'm going to do a quick conclusion because I know we have two minutes, probably.

Various reports, including the recently released TRC, helps increase understanding of everybody across Ontario. A key part of our mandate is that all future generations of Ontarians have an understanding of fundamental truths from an indigenous perspective, about the relationship and about treaties, not like the old textbooks you read that weren't really reflective of that. We must continue to help non-aboriginal and non-indigenous Ontarians understand that First Nations were the original occupants of this land, that they were here when Europeans came, that they were never conquered, and they have always possessed rights.

All Ontarians must understand that treaties were formal exchanges of promises that created rights and responsibilities for all of us. These rights and responsibilities are a part of our constitutional framework, and treaties represent solemn agreements to live together on this land. They were meant to last, and they are as relevant today as the day that they were signed.

The next generations must understand the truth about treaties and broken promises. Without that understanding, the patterns of distrust and disrespect, so firmly entrenched by our colonial past, will continue to echo. In this new spirit of co-operation and reconciliation, we've worked with First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners as a government so that we can articulate these principles as a

matter of policy, but much remains to be done. It's exhausting sometimes, actually, but exciting at the same time.

To put these principles into effect not only in programs and services we deliver to all Ontarians, but in the way First Nations, Métis, Inuit and non-aboriginal people live their lives and interact in this province remains the mission of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. It's really an honour to be here and have this opportunity and airtime to share that with you. I really look forward to working with all of you beyond just today in this room.

Meegwetch, wela'lin, merci.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Perfect timing, Deputy Minister.

Now we move to the third party. Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much. I've got a number of questions, but I just want to make a comment at the beginning to touch on something that you said, which is that there are a lot of people out there who want to do the right thing, but they don't know what that right thing is when it comes to assisting our First Nations brothers and sisters in Ontario.

From my perspective, I just want to say the following: I grew up in a time—born in the 1950s, grew up in the 1960s—when the attitude towards aboriginal people and First Nations people was not very healthy. Unfortunately, most of us who grew up in communities across Ontario grew up with all of the baggage that comes with some of those attitudes in regard to what we knew—I should say what we didn't know—about First Nations people in our own backyard.

I find it interesting now, and somewhat shameful, that I grew up in a community that has a very strong presence of First Nations people, and I knew nothing about them. What I believed is what I was told on the street, and all of those things that we heard were what you repeated because you weren't very smart; you just did that because that's what society set out for you.

Unfortunately—and, fortunately, in a weird way for me—becoming the member for Timmins–James Bay when they changed my riding from Cochrane South, which was Iroquois Falls, Matheson and Timmins and which I can do on a bicycle, I ended up with a riding that didn't have roads, which I love immensely. It really gave me an opportunity to better understand the First Nations stuff.

You said a couple of things that are actually quite encouraging, and the fact that you're the deputy—understanding this, I think, has to be underlined. I'm good at giving criticism, but I'm also good at giving credit where credit is due. Everything is about the treaty. The one thing that I've learned in dealing with my First Nations friends—people like Stan Louttit, who was a giant in my mind; I don't know if you knew Randy Kapashesit, who is no longer with us and who was one of the brightest people I've ever met, who could walk in both worlds and understand it and explain it to us, as Stan and others could, and different people—is that when people signed a treaty, they saw that as an opportunity to

basically share what they had, which was the land and the bounty of the land, in exchange for them to be able to advance in areas that they needed to advance in when it comes to access to things like health care, education and housing.

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Through all of this—even though we never lived up to our commitments; let's face it, neither the federal nor the provincial government have lived up to the commitments that we signed on Treaty 9—they never gave up hope and they never gave up on the treaty, even though it was signed by their forefathers.

Here we are, 100 years-plus after the treaty was signed, and we still have our First Nations friends saying that we need to live up to the treaty because they understand what that was all about. I think there needs to be a broader understanding of what that's all about from our side. The fact that you said that tells me that's half of the battle, and I commend you for that.

The other thing that I just want to say in passing, as well—I made a little note here; I just want make sure that I get this right—is the comment that you made in regard to people wanting to help and that they want to be able to do the right thing. I really get a sense, in the time that I've been a member and had to deal with Timmins–James Bay as the new riding, that we've gone from here to here when it comes to goodwill on the part of non-aboriginal people all over Ontario: Timmins, Toronto, wherever it might be. I think that's really, really healthy, but we should also very much recognize that there's still a minority out there who, quite frankly, have a pretty bad attitude when it comes to First Nations people, and they manifest it in ways that are not too pleasant. I think you know what I allude to.

But what our challenge is, I think, is to figure out how we can all, (1) as citizens, because we're all citizens of this planet that we live on, and (2) as legislators and bureaucrats—and I mean that in a very positive way—deal with making sure that we find ways of moving the yardsticks forward when it comes to what we signed as Ontario, because Ontario signed Treaty 9. It's not as if we're not part of this. We signed the treaty.

I just want to tell this story. It's a little bit off-colour and I might get in trouble, because some of my friends on the coast might see this and may wonder about my humour sometimes. There's a good friend of mine, Gilbert Cheechoo—I don't know if you ever knew Gilbert.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Yes, I do.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, Gilbert was one of my instructors. He's one of the hardest-ass First Nations people I know, who always reminded me when I was steering wrong, going the wrong way, and if I didn't quite get something, he would argue with me. He would call me, if he saw me say something in the media or on TV or in the Legislature, and he'd set me straight. In all of my touring that I've done up on the James Bay, when he was living there—he was a development officer at the time—he was always there.

He said something to me, and it was very striking. I said, “Hey, Gilbert. What kind of games did you play when you were a kid?” He said, “Oh, we played cowboys and Indians.” I said, “Really? Geez, that’s not much different than we did. How did you organize it?” He said, “Well, we were the cowboys.” You know where I’m going with this. She understands.

I said, “Cowboys? How can you be the cowboys? You’re the Indians. Why would you fight for the cowboys? They’re the guys who came in and raped your land and did all those bad things to you. Why would you try to emulate the people who persecuted you?” He said, “Oh no, Gilles. You need to understand. Back in the 1960s, there were spaghetti westerns out of Italy. The actors they had running as Indians, they were bad Indians who were not real natives; therefore, we didn’t want to be bad Indians, so we decided that we’d be the cowboys.”

But to me it meant something. It’s a bit a humorous, but it meant something in the sense of the psyche, of what our society did to us together, both native and non-native, when it comes to our attitudes on a whole bunch of issues. I just used that because to me it meant something. To others it might not.

Now, let me get to some questions. The first thing that I want to do is to start off by saying that the government has done something right, because I think that it’s far too easy to criticize, and at times you’ve just got to tip your hat. I said this this morning at public accounts, but for your benefit: Weeneebayko hospital, both in Attawapiskat and Moose Factory—in Moosonee, they had a fire. Moosonee had a fire at their clinic. The insurance paid for what they had to do when it came to reconstruction, but the HVAC system had to be changed, and it was about \$1.2 million or \$1.5 million. I can’t remember the exact number. The problem they had—they were in a Catch-22—was that if they had finished the construction, they would be without certification because their HVAC system wouldn’t meet the standard of today because it was a standard established when they built it 20 years ago.

The problem is, the ministry originally took the position, “Just do what you have to do, and we’ll do that later.” Well, who’s going to rip the ceiling apart to do it a second time, later, which is going to be a lot?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Sorry; was that in Moosonee or Moose Factory?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Moosonee. Weeneebayko hospital in Moosonee—I said Moose Factory originally.

I went to the Minister of Health, the Honourable Dr. Hoskins, and brought the issue to his attention. We got the funding, because he understood that all of us have a responsibility to try to do what’s right in order to develop the infrastructure we need in communities like Moosonee or Moose Factory or Attawapiskat or wherever it might be. At the time, the clinic was being operated in a curling rink. Imagine you’re going into a curling rink with a heart attack, with your child who has the flu, or whatever. For a year, kids were going into a curling rink. Essentially, a MASH unit was set up inside the curling rink. That’s

where people were being cared for. I give the government some credit, and I give the minister credit. They came across, and we got that fixed.

Then, last December, we had the spill at the Attawapiskat hospital—Weeneebayko, the Attawapiskat wing. Just so people know, Weeneebayko is the central hospital for the James Bay, and they have wings in different communities, and this particular one is the Attawapiskat wing. A spill happened in December. It was brought to the minister’s attention, I think, sometime in mid-January. There was a verbal commitment to do what was right at the beginning. It took a couple of weeks, three weeks, to get everybody lined up with what had to be done within his ministry, but we got the money to do the cleanup underneath that hospital so that we could take the contamination out.

The hospital was closed and evacuated. People were moved out of the community. We were overtaking other facilities in that community to provide hospital services. We undertook the cleanup. It was a really good process. What was really important was, they allowed the local community and Weeneebayko to drive it. So instead of the ministry coming in and saying, “Oh, you have to do this, that and the other thing. Let me tell you how to do this,” they actually took the leadership from the community. This was the minister’s decision, which I think was a very good decision because it allowed us to do what we had to do for the cleanup. I have to say, I’m hoping I’ll get a statement this week or next week.

We’re now moving back into the hospital. It’s very important to the community. Everybody is excited. The band office has put some conditions in regard to repatriation of the hospital because there is still a spill, under the spill, that we have to clean up, but I won’t get into that.

The point is, when there is the will, you can make the darndest things happen.

As I said this morning, we had a spill under a school 20-plus years ago. What happened at the Vezina school? Essentially, the parents had to pull their kids out of school as a protest in order to get the federal government to do something, and only after a whole bunch of effort on the part of the community—Charlie Angus and a whole bunch of other people—we finally built a new school 20 years later.

I’m a big fan of the provincial government when it comes to responding to issues within First Nations as compared to the feds—and I don’t mean that Liberal-Conservative-NDP kind of thing. The federal government doesn’t have the capacity to do most of what we do. We do health care. We do education. So I was just putting in my plug—which brings me to education, before I get to all of my questions, because I can’t get away from this.

Education on-reserve leaves a lot to be desired, when it comes to the results that we need. One of the things that I think we need to start thinking about—and there has been a memorandum of understanding in regard to dealing with some of this stuff on the part of the province—is entering into discussions about how we can do what we did with the federal hospital, where we

transferred the federal hospital to the province, under the stewardship of a board made up of First Nations people from the James Bay. How are we able to do something similar when it comes to education on-reserve?

I recognize it's very complicated. The federal government has to be willing, the province has to be willing, but the First Nation has to drive it, because if it ain't them, it ain't going to happen. And there's a relationship with First Nations and the federal government that sometimes clouds this whole thing.

My question to you—without getting into a long answer: Do you think that an initiative working in that direction, understanding that it's going to take some time, is a direction we should be endeavouring to go into, so that eventually we can create aboriginal school boards for First Nations people so their kids can learn within the context of their own language, as I did as a young franco-phone, and to be able to pass on the rest of what we need in education in a system that's more in tune with their needs and their culture?

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Ms. Deborah Richardson: The Ministry of Education would be better to respond to that question.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, but the general philosophy.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: The general philosophy—I think we need all parties in the room. We need the federal government that funds schools on-reserve, the provincial government that has an expertise in education and First Nations that are their own governments. Everybody needs to get together to figure out what the path is forward, because the graduation rate of First Nations children is dismal. I absolutely agree with you, but again, it is more relevant to the Ministry of Education. My view is absolutely, because without it, we're never going to move ahead. Everybody has to be in the room to talk about this.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay. A little side thing, because somebody called me the other day from Moosonee; they're trying to create a park at Bishop Belleau school with slides and things for kids. Is there a fund in your ministry or others in order to offset the costs of buying equipment in a kids' park?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: What we have done in the past is we've partnered with different foundations. So Let Them Be Kids foundation, we partnered with them to do a playground in Pikangikum. You could put them in touch with us and then we can help kind of manoeuvre—that's a big part of what we do. If we don't have the money, we pull together others.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll get your card and I'll follow up on that after.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Yes, sure.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Before I get to that—I'm going to get to that after. NAPS funding.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh my God. So we did the right thing. Some years ago, we transferred policing to the First Nations so that they can run their own police services, and I think that was the right thing to do. The

problem that we've got is that the funding has not kept pace with the needs of NAPS because they police all of the James Bay, all of Treaty 9 and Treaty 3, down to my area.

Is there any movement in regard to the negotiations between the province and the federal government in regard to trying to address those funding shortfalls? Are we any further ahead than we were three years ago?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: I don't have anything to add on that. I'm not up to speed on what's happening with the policing negotiations, so MCSCS would be better to answer that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was just wondering if you had heard anything. All right.

The other thing I just want to raise is, obviously, you can't talk about First Nation communities without talking about housing. So I'm just going to give you a little picture. In most of the communities I represent, people hot-bed. It's the way you've got to live. You have a house with three bedrooms, one bedroom per family. You take out the closet—two or three bunks inside the closet. If you've got five kids, well, then you take turns who is going to sleep where or when. You hot-bed, as you do on a submarine, of all things.

The reason for that, I would say, is a really simple one. The federal government funding when it comes to housing has never kept pace with the need for housing on-reserve. In Attawapiskat, we're utilizing the old De Beers trailers as a way for people to have housing because there is no housing available. There are essentially families living within those trailers that you would get if you were on a construction site, like the ones that you stay in if you're on a fly-in or in a remote area.

The problem that we now have is that we're trying to close that down—the band is. But people are just going to squat it, because there is no other place to go. Where are you going to go? Outside? It's only 40 below or 50 below in the winter. So you don't have a lot of places to go.

My question is this—it's a statement and a question. Yes, housing is a federal responsibility. I get that. But they're Ontarians. They're Ontario citizens, as we are. Has there been any attempt to take a look at a not-for-profit model of some type, where we're able to, as a province, develop housing strategies that allow the province to be involved in some way in order to be able to assist with a housing strategy that might be not-for-profit housing type models?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: I'm not familiar. I know that municipal affairs and housing does have aboriginal housing off-reserve. I'm not familiar with anything on-reserve that I've heard of, because again, typically it's—whatever they're called; I still call them INAC, I can't help it—INAC that funds on-reserve, and we all know that it's not nearly enough compared to what the demand is on-reserve. So not that I'm aware of.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I say publicly and privately I'm not a big fan of INAC. And it's not the people there; they're great people.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: No, I know. I work there. I know.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's just the policies behind INAC—boy, it's pretty depressing.

Back when we were government, 1990 to 1995, we actually did some housing. I think we might have been the only ones who ever did that.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Really? Interesting.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So we found a way to do it and what we did—

Ms. Deborah Richardson: The plumbing.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's right. You do remember, then?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Yes, the plumbing. I've heard about that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So this is an interesting story. When they built the housing—the federal government built the housing on-reserve—they didn't bother putting toilets in. So you had houses without toilets. Everybody had to go outside in the backyard. It was like a Britain-in-the-1960s kind of thing, you know?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Well, Pikangikum First Nation is still like that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, there are still some. Exactly.

Anyway, what we had done is we were trying to force the federal government to do something they wouldn't do, so we created a program that allowed the addition onto the houses—being able to put an addition onto the house that was a bathroom. Then we made a deal with the federal government where we would pay for infrastructure to and from the house for the pipes and then the federal government paid for the infrastructure in the ground up to the house.

The only reason I raise this is that where there's a will, there's a way. As the Minister of Health figured out, there was a way of resolving the problem with the spill underneath the hospital in Attawapiskat and fixing the problem in Moosonee.

There's got to be some way that we, as a province, can get involved in housing. All I know is if we're waiting for the federal government, the model's not too good. We're going to be where we are now 10 years from now. So I just raise that.

I just want to say one other thing on housing, and this is—I know I'm going to get into trouble over this one with some people who have a different view than me. The whole thing around Theresa Spence and her manager: That was one of the grossest examples of—I have to say it—almost a desired attack in order to be able to advance a defence on the part of the federal government of the day against the First Nation. She was doing things that were pretty unorthodox when it came to protesting to get housing on-reserve. She did a hunger strike, she was down in Ottawa for a while; you probably visited her, as I did. They did an emergency resolution; Mushkegowuk did the same thing. They were making lots of noise, and the federal government didn't like that because it didn't reflect well on them.

I don't mean this in a combative way, but I think it's systemic to the problem that we have when it comes to dealing with First Nations. The fact that a federal government tried to make that look as if somehow or other she pocketed money and her band manager pocketed money is pretty insulting. You know as well as I do that nothing gets spent without an audit. Indian Affairs doesn't give you money and allow you to do what you want with it; at one point, you're accountable to an audit. Everything has to be accounted by way of Indian Affairs. Most communities find themselves in third party or under—what's the other one? Administration, I guess.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Co-management.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Co-management administration, and they were under co-management.

It always struck me that it was a dark moment in Canadian history when it came to the relationship of First Nations and our government, because rather than addressing the problem of a housing shortage, we turned it on the First Nation.

I still have people today who say to me, “Well, why should we give them anything? Look what they did with their money.” Well, they didn't do anything with their money. They didn't have any money to start with. I just wanted to put all that on record because I think that it had to be said.

With regard to infrastructure, I found out something that I didn't know which was rather surprising. There are no infrastructure funds for band offices from the federal government.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: They did it a number of years ago, many years ago, and it was one-time funding. At the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, we have a very modest capital grants program that is \$3 million a year—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wow.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: I know—so we do support community-based initiatives.

Typically, in the past, it had to be kind of like a business centre, but we revamped the criteria because we noticed that there was a lot more demand in this area. So we do cost-shares—only up to a certain amount, I think \$500,000 or \$750,000 for remotes, but at least it has been able to move the yardstick a little bit.

The youth centre in Moose Cree: We funded that, for example. So yes, I know. You see a lot—most of the band offices are not acceptable working conditions.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got two that are evacuated right now.

The other thing is, while we're talking evacuations, do you have an update on where we're at with regard to the evacuation of the citizens out of Kashechewan?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: I don't.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You know that we have a number of families that are in Kapuskasing who have been there for almost two years now? Thank God for Kapuskasing; they've been wonderful hosts. Mayor Spacek and his administration have done a great job of welcoming people into the community and the community has responded well. But from what I understand—and I was talking to

the chief the other day, Leo Friday—there has been no move in order to replace those houses. There's some talk about doing some duplexes up there starting this summer. Have you heard anything?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: In Kash?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: In Kash, yes.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: That would be federal government funding—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I understand that. Have you heard anything?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: I haven't heard anything about that at all, and I did see Chief Friday yesterday. But like I said, we're provincial, so I don't really—I haven't heard anything.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson: He's a guy with a good sense of humour.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: A very good sense of humour—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Also, a very wise man. I've worked with him over the years.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay. How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): About eight minutes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I still have eight minutes? Do you know what? I can't believe I went through all of that so efficiently.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: This is a fun conversation, isn't it?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, it was good.

I don't have to use the eight minutes if I don't want to, and I'm probably going to end this a bit short.

Mr. Norm Miller: You can save it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, maybe.

I just want to end on this point and to say: As with everything, it takes will to fix this stuff.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: It does.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And I think the mistake that we make at the provincial level—and I'm not pointing fingers at you guys; I'm pointing the finger at the collective us—is that we look at a lot of this as being a federal responsibility, and leave it to the feds to respond to what is essentially a crisis in education, a crisis in housing, a crisis in infrastructure and a crisis in water on pretty well all of our reserves.

The fact that we have citizens in this province and in this country who are living in that condition is a blight on all of us. It's not just the federal government, because there have been governments of different stripes. I think at one point we, as a province, have to accept that we have to be part of the solution. I recognize that it's going to cost some money and it's going to be difficult, but I urge that we start going in the direction of saying, "Let's start putting the stuff in place that we need now." That way, 10 years from now, 20 years from now, the new deputy minister and the new members of all of the ridings that we represent have had some progress on

these files, because the fact that we still have people living in these conditions 160 years after Confederation is pretty abysmal.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Thank you.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you for coming in today. It's the first time I've been to estimates when the minister is not here, but maybe it's better to have the deputy and others answering the questions.

I guess I'll start out, seeing as this is estimates and we're supposed to talk about dollars and cents in part, by asking a high-level question about your budget and your budget going forward. Is it a projected increase? Or is it frozen in the next number of years as the government tries to reach a balanced budget?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: To my knowledge, it's just the status quo. I don't project an increase, and I hope that there's no decrease.

Mr. Norm Miller: Sorry. You hope there is no—

Ms. Deborah Richardson: That there's no decrease.

Mr. Norm Miller: No decrease—right. Okay.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: I think it's just the same.

Mr. Norm Miller: That's kind of what I guessed might be the situation, but I wasn't sure.

I just happened to meet with the Ontario Library Association, and one of the people who I met with is a representative of Six Nations Public Library. I'll bring up a small issue—probably not small for them—to do with libraries that the gentleman, Mr. Donald Lynch, who is chair of the board, pointed out to me. First of all, at Six Nations Public Library, they are not going to be in compliance with the accessibility act as of next year, which means that their library will lose accreditation. That means it wouldn't meet the same standard as libraries everywhere else, whether they're on-reserve or not on-reserve. He did point out that often there seem to be lower standards for on-reserve services than if you're off-reserve, and he was making that point with their library. He also pointed out—I don't know that this is the correct number—that there are 133 reserves and only 46 have libraries.

I guess I would ask if there is any provincial program that would assist aboriginal communities in terms of meeting the needs of their libraries, where obviously that's important for literacy and for education, and if there are any specific programs that would assist.

Their dream is to have a new library that would be an archive as well, because they've got lots of important things they would like to keep in their archive. Whether they would qualify for—if there is a capital program, which I know comes along from time to time. I don't know whether they're always available to First Nations either, or aboriginal communities.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: We do have that capital grants program to encourage them—

Mr. Norm Miller: The small one that—

Ms. Deborah Richardson: It's the small one, but they could qualify for some sort of upgrade. I mean, there is a

long wait-list; you can imagine \$3 million doesn't go far. But they could definitely apply for that. So have them hook in through the ministry, even if it's just through me, and then I can manoeuvre. That's the first piece.

Then in terms of libraries, I don't even know which ministry they're housed at but I can endeavour to find out a little bit more. I'm not clear about the accessibility requirements on-reserve, so their funding must be subject to that. I can endeavour to find out a little bit more.

Mr. Norm Miller: The only provincial funding I was aware of for off-reserve libraries—I happened to be in Parry Sound last week and the Parry Sound library received \$150,000 from the Trillium Foundation, which I would assume would be available on-reserve as well. So Parry Sound got \$150,000 to do some accessibility improvements to the library and things like new flooring in the library etc.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: I'm not sure if that's under a municipal government or if the municipality funds libraries. I'm not sure how libraries are funded; it's just an unknown area for me, but we can find out.

Mr. Norm Miller: Typically a municipality does provide—they are usually a major player when it's in a municipality, but obviously this is on-reserve.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Yes. Connect them with me and I can try to support them and help them manoeuvre through the system.

Mr. Norm Miller: Okay, thank you.

We just had public accounts on aboriginal education earlier in the day. The Premier's mandate letters last year highlighted education as an important area for improvement. We know that the graduation rates for aboriginal youth trail the general public big time. I'm just wondering what role the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs plays in terms of trying to improve that situation. Was it part of the minister's mandate letter as well?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Was education a part of the mandate letter? I think that it was.

Ms. Alison Pilla: We have an ongoing commitment to work with the Ministry of Education on helping improve education both on- and off-reserve. They have the lead but we provide a significant amount of support to them in that—

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me for a second. When you start to speak, could you identify yourself? Thank you.

Ms. Alison Pilla: Sure, sorry. I'm Alison Pilla. I'm the assistant deputy at aboriginal affairs.

There are a number of programs that we've supported the Ministry of Education in. For instance, they provide some funding for languages allocation and they have some native studies funding as well. They have a per-pupil amount allocation. It's part of their education supplement. They have about \$51 that they're specifically applying to First Nations, Métis and Inuit education issues.

We work with them and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities on post-secondary education as

well. First Nations have some technical institutes that are supported by government.

I think the other important thing that education has been doing is they've been asking their aboriginal students to voluntarily identify themselves as aboriginal. Once you know how that cohort is doing specifically, you can target and tailor specific education strategies to those particular students because sometimes they need more wraparound services and supports. So the Ministry of Education has been working—they have an aboriginal education council—with that council and others to make those improvements.

Mr. Norm Miller: And do they provide updates? Does the Ministry of Education then provide updates to the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs on progress being made?

Ms. Alison Pilla: We certainly are in close connection with them on a week-to-week basis about what they're doing. But they also have a series of reports. They have a First Nations, Métis and Inuit education strategy and they've had a couple of reports that are public on progress that's being made. So that's publicly available.

Mr. Norm Miller: So then, sticking with this training theme, I was going to ask some questions a bit about the Ring of Fire and the development there, which obviously involves a number of aboriginal communities. Certainly, I see it as being the greatest prospect for hope for that area, providing jobs and incomes etc. But it seems to be also taking a long time to get any real progress. When it eventually happens, obviously, there would be the potential for a lot of jobs in mining activities. Mining, as an activity, is the largest employer of aboriginal people.

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I know I toured the Detour Gold mine, up north of Cochrane, last month, and 14% of their workforce is aboriginal.

Getting the education component—a high school education, but then also specific technical training—is so important, so that aboriginal people will have access to the potential jobs in the Ring of Fire when it happens, but also generally in mining and forestry-type activities. Can you provide any information on what the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs does or how they assist in improving training for aboriginal people?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: We work closely with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to create partnerships and opportunities. For example, you're speaking about the Ring of Fire: The Matawa tribal council has a bit of a training institute that they've set up, and they're working on different kinds of training. They've partnered with industry and the tribal council coordinates for members of the community—because they're mostly fly-in communities, and they do fly in to attend the training.

Ontario also has invested over \$3.2 million on an Aboriginal Skills Advancement Pilot Program that has supported over 100 aboriginal learners' skills advancement, ranging from literacy and basic skills to apprenticeship training—

Mr. Norm Miller: Where is that? Is it in a physical site somewhere?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Yes, I think it's through the Matawa, through that area—

Mr. Norm Miller: Is that in Thunder Bay?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Yes. Matawa is located in Thunder Bay.

The government also provides funding for aboriginal post-secondary education and training, totalling \$97 million over the next three years.

There was also a one-time investment to Ontario's nine aboriginal post-secondary education and training institutes. That was in the 2015 budget. I think that was \$5 million.

Mr. Norm Miller: So there are nine specific—

Ms. Deborah Richardson: —that are aboriginal-specific.

Mr. Norm Miller: Where are they located?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: They're right across the province. There's one in Thunder Bay. There's the First Nations Technical Institute, which is near Mohawk-Bay of Quinte. There's Six Nations Polytechnic through Six Nations. You're testing me to cite off the nine. They're located right across the whole province. Many of them have really good partnerships or affiliations with a number of post-secondary institutions that are in their proximity. They run some really interesting programs, and they've got a lot of capacity.

Mr. Norm Miller: Sticking with the Ring of Fire: At the start of the government's term, they announced a development corporation. They did a press release that said they would work to bring First Nations and the public and private sectors together. Has this development corporation succeeded in involving First Nations groups?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: I can't speak to that; the Minister of Northern Development and Mines would need to. I'm not too familiar with the development corporation, so I couldn't speak to that specific issue.

Mr. Norm Miller: So you don't know whether there's any First Nations representation on the board of the development corporation?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: No, I'm not sure what the status of that is. The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines would need to answer that.

Mr. Norm Miller: Is that something you could provide information on?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: I can endeavour to talk to MNDM.

Mr. Norm Miller: That would be good.

In your opening comments, you talked about some of the things you're working on, and one of them was resource revenue-sharing. Can you provide some information about it, please?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: When we say resource benefits-sharing, it also involves skills training, capacity-funding partnerships, economic development opportunities and revenue-sharing. Specifically with Matawa tribal council, we have signed a regional framework

agreement that also includes revenue-sharing as a part of that, with a number of other commitments.

Also, under the political accord and on a bilateral basis—when I say bilateral, we work with a number of the PTOs on a bilateral—

Mr. Norm Miller: Sorry, PTOs?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Provincial-territorial organizations, for example, Treaty 3, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Anishinabek Nation. We have bilateral agreements and we are in discussions with a number of those organizations around resource revenue-sharing. Also, even under the Green Energy Act, for example, there's a \$650-million Aboriginal Loan Guarantee Program and an Aboriginal Energy Partnerships Program, and aboriginal price incentives as a part of the feed-in tariff program that promote First Nations and Métis involvement in renewable energy initiatives. As well, we provide up to \$30 million over 10 years to the Métis Voyageur Development Fund to support resource-based Métis businesses and entrepreneurs.

Again, in terms of supporting aboriginal groups on economic development, we do have the \$25 million over three years on a new Aboriginal Economic Development Fund. But we are very interested, as per the political accord—

Mr. Norm Miller: For the administration of those, the Métis voyageur fund and this \$25-million fund, can you help me understand how it works?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Sure.

Ms. Alison Pilla: The Métis Voyageur Development Fund was a fund that was intended to provide more access for resource development businesses for Métis. We negotiated an agreement with the Métis Nation of Ontario. They set up a separate structure. It's a not-for-profit—

Mr. Norm Miller: How long ago was that?

Ms. Alison Pilla: It was a couple of years ago. I think it was 2011, but I could be mistaken. It was around 2011-12.

We set up a separate corporate structure. It has a board of directors. They essentially function like an aboriginal financial institution; I'm not sure if you're familiar with those. They provide a few business grants, but they mostly provide loans to Métis businesses that meet the qualifications and are vetted and screened by this independent, arm's-length, not-for-profit corporation from government.

Mr. Norm Miller: So it's operating essentially as a bank for Métis businesses.

Ms. Alison Pilla: Similar to that, yes.

Mr. Norm Miller: And it's probably too early to know how successful they are in terms of success rate of loans, because it's only been two years, I would assume.

Ms. Alison Pilla: Probably we have to wait a couple of years to look at the loan loss rate, but they've been pretty successful at leveraging other money against the money that the Ontario government provides them. We provide them with up to \$30 million over 10 years, which works out to up to \$3 million each year, of course de-

pending on the reports that we get back in terms of how the business is functioning. There are probably a few areas where we need to get some information back, but they've been able to leverage a fair amount of non-government money in addition to the funding that the government provides. I probably do have a figure for that somewhere that I could get you.

The Aboriginal Economic Development Fund has a number of different streams, but one of the streams of funding in that economic development fund is to aboriginal financial institutions in Ontario. So it's sort of structured a similar way. We've provided a certain amount of money to those aboriginal financial institutions, again, to loan out to First Nations, Métis and Inuit businesses beyond the resource sector more broadly to support economic and business development there.

Mr. Norm Miller: How long has it been around?

Ms. Alison Pilla: That one is very new. We just started receiving applications and structuring that part of the fund this year. So it's too early to really report back on that.

Mr. Norm Miller: How much money is it each year?

Ms. Alison Pilla: The Aboriginal Economic Development Fund is \$25 million over three years, so it was \$5 million the first year, and then \$10 million and \$10 million. I think that the amount of money that's going to the aboriginal financial institutions—I'm not sure if I have my note here—is about \$2.5 million. Somebody will correct me if I'm wrong on that. But there are a few streams in that fund.

Mr. Norm Miller: Okay. Thank you for that.

I'll move on to land claims. Particularly, you mentioned the Algonquin land claim, that you reached an agreement in principle in June. I guess I would ask when you think the whole thing is going to be completely done. You also mentioned consultation with the general public. What's going on with that going forward?

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Ms. Deborah Richardson: I will turn this over to Assistant Deputy Minister Didluck, who's in charge of the land claims area.

Mr. David Didluck: Great. Thank you. And since the deputy has introduced me, you now know who I am.

With regard to Algonquin, the consultations around the preliminary draft agreement in principle have really been ongoing since about 2012, when the document was released. By our calculations, we've met with approximately 2,000 or 2,500 individual people over nine sets of consultation meetings to get feedback on that draft agreement in principle. The parties have initialled the agreement, but the key, of course, is that the First Nation communities themselves—the Algonquins, which includes the community of Pikwàkanagàn, which is the reserve-based community, and the other 10 communities that make up that claim area—have to ratify the agreement. They have to say, "Yes, we agree with the terms that the negotiators"—Canada, Ontario and the Algonquin—"have come to an agreement on;" that they've ratified that.

The projection is that they're going to likely go to a community ratification vote early in the calendar year. It's the Algonquins' decision to do that in terms of the specific timing, MPP Miller, but it's looking like it's probably February or March. That's the intent.

If the Algonquins ratify the agreement, if there's—

Mr. Norm Miller: Is that just a majority vote?

Mr. David Didluck: There are specific provisions in the agreement that govern how the ratification process works, but absolutely, a majority vote is important. It also depends if there are differences, for instance, between the off- and on-reserve voters.

Mr. Norm Miller: And I assume they need a certain percentage of people to vote as well.

Mr. David Didluck: Correct, absolutely. Hoping, of course, that there's a successful ratification, that would mean that the parties, then, would move to finalize and sign that agreement in principle. In order to do that, our minister would be going back to cabinet to affirm the signature of that agreement and be seeking instructions in terms of the next phase of negotiations, which I think was your other question: How long will this take?

Based on the experience in other parts of Canada, these large, multi-party, comprehensive claim agreements, as you know, have 25-year, 35-year time averages for complete negotiation. But as you know, we've already invested those 20 years to get to this part. Optimistically, we're hopeful that within another four- to six-year time frame we could have the land selection package, all of the environmentals and the consultations that are associated with that comprehensively wrapped up in that time period.

But as you know, Ontario's not the only party to those negotiations. We have a federal government and we have 10 Algonquin communities that make up the Algonquin nation, and everyone has to agree.

So that's our optimistic time frame. We're very hopeful that the Algonquin will say yes to the agreement and its contents in the February-March period of the new calendar year.

Mr. Norm Miller: So likely, if they say yes, you're saying maybe six years from now it might—

Mr. David Didluck: That would be our hope, yes.

Mr. Norm Miller: I know I've had some of these people affected, some of the communities in the area, concerned at times about not enough consultation or not open enough consultation. So there still would be further consultation after you get a signed agreement?

Mr. David Didluck: Absolutely. The process of engaging the public doesn't stop simply because we have an agreement in principle. You may remember, when the agreement in principle was being negotiated, Ontario set up two sets of advisory processes, one specifically with municipalities throughout the claim area and another committee of external advisers that had everyone represented from hunting interests to cottagers to private landowners to recreationalists. Those processes were the formal mechanisms of consultation. That's being rolled forward into the next phase.

Now, they may be tweaked and adjusted because what we have today that we didn't have 15 years ago is a land package. We have 220-odd parcels of land identified now for the settlement agreement, so we can be much more specific and precise in terms of who's impacted by the negotiations. In the early phases of negotiations, you don't have that luxury, you don't have that detail. But today we do have that detail.

Going forward, I would envision a much more focused effort around the land selections that have been identified for the agreement and by those materially impacted groups—hunters, cottagers, private landowners etc. Municipalities, too.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you for that. Staying on the same topic, Caledonia: What's the current status? Is there a land claim going on, first of all? Secondly, what's the status of Douglas Creek Estates and other parcels of land that may or may not be held for any negotiations?

Mr. David Didluck: Sure. You know the history quite well. Douglas Creek Estates was the parcel of land that was occupied back in February 2006 as a result of the outstanding land claims that the Six Nations community had brought forward to Canada. There was an effort post that occupation—

Mr. Norm Miller: So to be clear, that's a federal land claim?

Mr. David Didluck: Yes. There are claims against the government of Canada; correct.

However, regardless, Ontario is a participant because we manage land and resources. As you know, it's our constitutional obligation. It was after that occupation in 2006 that the governments of Ontario and Canada came together with Six Nations to actually formally commence discussions on those land claims.

Unfortunately, as you probably also remember from that history, it was three years later, in about 2009, that Canada withdrew from that process. There was not progress made. It's really been since 2009 that the formal negotiations with regard to the outstanding claims have not proceeded.

Now we're hopeful. There is obviously a change of administration federally, and we know that our colleagues in the Six Nations communities have been actively lobbying our federal colleagues to come back to the table. It's a message our minister and our ministry have also been consistently delivering since 2009. I would like to give you the glass-half-full answer that we're hopeful that, at some point, negotiations will recommence.

The focus of the province in the interim period has been around looking at partnerships and economic development opportunities with Six Nations, ensuring that those land holdings of Burtch and Douglas Creek Estates are managed either safely, without occupation, or, in the case of Burtch, as the deputy noted in her introductory comments, looking at actually making an interim offer to transfer those lands back to the community. But those are details that continue to be worked out.

We're kind of optimistic and hopeful that at some future point, all parties can get back to the table and deal with the underlying matters, which are those unresolved claims against Canada.

Mr. Norm Miller: And with land claims, I gather there are different statuses of whether it's a recognized land claim or whether it's not a recognized claim. I'm sure there are probably other technical terms that I'm not familiar with.

Did the federal government not recognize that there's a land claim here? Is that why they removed themselves from negotiating?

Mr. David Didluck: I don't want to attempt to speak for our federal colleagues here. I think that would probably be unfair of us all wearing a provincial hat in this room.

Having said that, I would just say that the federal government has a fairly specific policy in terms of how it governs its approach to land claim activity nationally, and they apply that lens whether you're in British Columbia, Alberta or here in Ontario. I think our Six Nations counterparts would say that that is a fairly rigid process and, of course, that's not the process that we use here provincially.

I guess without getting into all the details of what's the nature of the claim, the claim goes back to what the history says and whether there are legal obligations owed to the community. Certainly, as you know, in the eyes of the Six Nations community, there are extensive legal obligations owned by the government of Canada. That's just a reality I hope our federal colleagues will see.

Interruption.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Madam Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Yes?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Given the time—and we've got 10 minutes to the vote and then the vote will take some time after that—I'm wondering if we shouldn't adjourn.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Ballard has moved a motion to adjourn. Is that okay with the committee?

Mr. Norm Miller: Sorry, you're—

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): What's he saying is there's a 10-minute bell. It's now—

Mr. Han Dong: How much time does Mr. Miller have left?

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): He has about three minutes. We have 10 minutes for the bell, a few minutes—we'll be back here at about quarter to. There will be about 15 minutes left.

Is it the will of the committee that we take that 15 minutes or that we call it a day? It's up to you.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Call it a day, Norm.

Mr. Norm Miller: Well, you can give me my three minutes now. Then I'll call it a day—

Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'm afraid we have to adjourn when the bells start ringing.

Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): If you want to take two minutes now, Mr. Miller, take them.

Mr. Norm Miller: Okay.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): We can still make it up in eight minutes. The Clerk's just telling me—go for it.

Mr. Norm Miller: Okay. Thank you. You also mentioned Friendship Centres, that you had a personal job at one point in Toronto. In my town of Parry Sound, we have a Friendship Centre as well. I happened to go to the annual meeting once, and my main recollection was that the finances weren't that stable at that particular Friendship Centre. Are there provincial programs at all that support Friendship Centres around the province?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Lots of them. Friendship Centres get core funding nationally from the National Association of Friendship Centres. Many of them get funding from places like the United Way, for example, or other foundations, but then many of them are sort of programmatic areas. If they provide supportive housing for seniors, they get funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Sometimes they're able to access homelessness initiatives. A number of ministries would provide that funding and some of it is on an ongoing basis. I know the supportive housing programs are ongoing—almost core funding.

Mr. Norm Miller: Okay. Thank you for that.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: They're quite resourceful. You're right; they're resourceful with what they have.

Mr. Norm Miller: And for my last question, since I think we're just about out of time: Has the ministry

begun its education and awareness campaign on treaties and treaty rights, as mandated by the Premier?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Do we—

Mr. Norm Miller: Your education program on treaties and treaty rights.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Oh, yes. Yes, we do. We've gotten approval for that, and so we're working on implementing that. We need to implement that with our aboriginal partners because we just can't unilaterally come up with what the treaty strategy is and what the educational information is. We're working with partners.

I gave the example of the Lego kit. Treaty 3 has some really interesting pieces. So there's a number of First Nations groups that do have some great pieces, and they want to develop more. We want to be able to share that out. We also do Aboriginal 101. I think I saw you when I did it, right? We go and travel across government and go to senior management meetings—anybody who will listen—to educate people about treaties and aboriginal people in this province.

Interjection.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Oh, yes. We have the treaty map, too.

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes. I have one up in my office.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Yay!

Mr. Norm Miller: Anyway, thank you, and I think that's probably all the time I have. I appreciate you coming this afternoon.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you, Mr. Miller. We are adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1732.

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