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des débats
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Mercredi 18 mai 2016

**Standing Committee on
Estimates**

Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs

**Comité permanent des
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère des Affaires autochtones

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 18 May 2016

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The committee met at 1552 in room 151.

MINISTRY OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Good afternoon, everyone. We are now going to resume consideration of vote 2001 of the estimates of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. There is a total of 11 hours and 55 minutes remaining.

Before we resume consideration of the estimates, if there are any inquiries from the previous meeting 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: Not that I'm aware of.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Okay. When the committee was adjourned, the official opposition had 13 minutes left in their round of questions. Mr. Miller, the floor is yours.

Mr. Norm Miller: I had asked questions earlier with regard to the duty to consult, so I wanted to follow up a little more on that. Starting off with: In the 2015 Auditor General's report, the issue of the lack of clarity on the duty to consult with aboriginal communities was addressed. The Auditor General went on to state that "one reason for Ontario's low ranking among Canadian jurisdictions in the investment attractiveness of its mining sector is the lack of clarity and understanding around the aboriginal consultation process by all parties involved. In comparison to other provinces and territories, Ontario has delegated more aspects of the consultation process to the private sector, and is less directly involved in the process than other jurisdictions."

Certainly, the track record is such that we've had a lot of companies getting—there's conflict out on the field, where we had, in December of 2009, Platinex receiving \$5 million from the government to end a dispute with the KI First Nation. They walked away from their project.

In March of 2012, we had God's Lake Resources receive \$3.5 million for surrendering its mining lease near KI.

In May of 2014, Canadian Star Minerals Ltd. announced a lawsuit for \$152 million in damages because it believes Ontario failed in its obligation to perform the consultation with Shoal Lake 39 and 40 First Nation.

As I mentioned previously, there's an ongoing lawsuit for \$110 million with regard to Northern Superior Resources, again regarding failure to consult with First Nations on mining claims.

I know you mentioned that you were in a process of looking at that responsibility. I noted that the government of Saskatchewan seems to take a much more hands-on process. In fact, I'd just like to get into the record what they have with regard to the duty to consult. They do take a much more hands-on approach. The government takes their responsibility to consult—does it themselves, more so than just delegating it to companies.

"The government of Saskatchewan First Nation and Métis Consultation Policy Framework ... presents the government of Saskatchewan's policy on consultation with First Nations and Métis communities for use by government ministries, agencies, crown corporations, First Nations, Métis and proponents. It includes the Duty to Consult Policy, a section on the policy's application to decisions affecting lands and resources, a policy context section and a section on interest-based engagement. The consultation policy framework will also provide direction to government ministries, agencies and crown corporations to establish operational procedures to consistently implement the consultation policy across government.

"In accordance with this policy framework, the government of Saskatchewan is responsible for determining whether a duty to consult is triggered and if so, the level of consultation required. In the case of asserted rights, the government is also responsible for determining whether there is a credible basis for the claim. Government decision-makers requiring assistance interpreting this policy, undertaking pre-consultation assessments and developing consultation plans are encouraged to contact the aboriginal consultation branch, Ministry of First Nations and Métis Relations....

"Although the focus of this policy is on consultation as it applies to treaty and aboriginal rights associated with lands and renewable resources, it does not exclude application to other treaty and aboriginal rights.

"This policy takes effect June 2010, replacing the Government of Saskatchewan Interim Guide for Consultation with First Nations and Métis People."

I just wanted to get that into the record because it seems to me that they're taking a much more hands-on approach and the government is much more directly involved in the actual consultation versus what seems to

be happening in Ontario, which is that the responsibility is being delegated. In cases where the conflict seems to happen, it's junior mining companies that maybe don't have the expertise or understanding of what they should be doing. They think that they can just do what they want, and they end up in conflict. So we've had a bunch of conflict.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Miller, you have only a few minutes left, just so you know.

Mr. Norm Miller: Really?

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Yes—sorry; I'm misreading the clock. You have about eight minutes left. Sorry.

Mr. Norm Miller: Okay. I was going to say that I thought that went awfully quickly, those 13 minutes.

I guess what I'd like to know is: Is the government considering taking its responsibility to consult in the process that you're going through right now so that we get an improved situation in the province of Ontario which will benefit First Nations, industry, mining companies and prospectors, etc.?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question, Mr. Miller. It's an important question. The Ontario government want to ensure that indigenous peoples have the opportunity to succeed and fully participate in the workforce and the economy. When indigenous people prosper, all of Ontario prospers. We've been working very hard with our indigenous partners on multiple initiatives to support their skills training, their capacity building, their partnership and improved economic opportunities. These initiatives will help First Nations as well as indigenous-owned companies build the capacity they need to work with willing partners, including private sector partners. The Supreme Court of Canada has made several decisions that have addressed and have refined our understanding of the crown's consultation obligations, including circumstances where accommodation may be required. Accommodation may involve a ministry taking steps to avoid irreparable harm or to minimize the adverse effects of a proposed government action or decision on established or asserted indigenous or treaty rights.

This year, the ministry has taken steps to explore new provincial approaches to consultation—I think that's what your question is getting at. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs has formed a time-limited consultation policy project office that is tasked with undertaking engagement with First Nation and Métis partners and industry, to review the province's current consultation practices and protocols and identify opportunities for improvement in that process.

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Consultation practices help support the reconciliation between the crown and aboriginal peoples and help to strengthen our relationship with our aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities in Ontario. Successful consultation and, in some circumstances, accommodation can lead to agreements between indigenous communities' proponents and the crown that create opportunities for

new partnerships, employment opportunities and economic spinoffs.

The New Relationship Fund has been designed to support indigenous communities and organizations to participate in a very meaningful way in the consultation and engagement process with government and—to your point—with the private sector. Ontario established the New Relationship Fund in 2008 to fulfill a key recommendation of the Ipperwash report. Since then, Ontario has invested approximately \$111 million through the fund, and we'll invest another \$14.5 million in the upcoming year. That's a total of over \$125 million.

The fund is vital to the participation and meaningful consultation and engagement by indigenous communities and organizations with the government, including lands and resource planning. It has a number of objectives:

- to assist First Nations and Métis communities and indigenous organizations to build the consultation and engagement capacity, as well as organization capacity and expertise;

- to create jobs by building capacity to engage in economic development;

- to assist in developing and improving relationships and partnerships among government, aboriginal organizations and communities; and

- to assist in improving the quality of life and the closing of the socio-economic gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

The results have been positive. We will be funding 108 projects, representing 128 communities in Ontario.

The duty to consult is a duty on the crown. Line ministries are responsible for establishing processes to ensure that the crown's duty-to-consult obligations are met under the regulatory processes that they manage.

The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs continues to work with ministries to develop more specific guidance and guidance tools and information respecting the duty to consult. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs supports other ministries in understanding and in meeting the crown's duty to consult. The aboriginal relations and ministry partnerships division of the ministry provides support through corporate advice and facilitation of dialogue between ministries on consultation issues and approaches.

The ministry is also engaged with aboriginal communities and organizations on decisions that may not trigger the crown's duty to consult. The ministry actively promotes and shares good practices for engagement and relationship building with aboriginal partners.

I've talked about the New Relationship Fund and how it's designed to support indigenous communities and organizations to participate in this consultation process—

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Miller, you now do have just over two minutes left.

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm sorry?

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Continue. I'm just letting Mr. Miller know that he had just over two minutes left.

Hon. David Zimmer: We have a suite of other support tools that support the consultation process. They include, but are not limited to—for instance, ministries can access an online application for information about treaties, claims and aboriginal communities, which in turn is linked to the geography and allows for ministries to log and track consultation and engagement activities.

We provide operational guidance on delegation to third parties. It's confidential. It has solicitor-client privilege guidance about delegating procedural aspects of consultation to third parties.

I want to say something about the consultation policy project office. Ontario is committed to meeting its duty to consult. Good consultation practices can only strengthen relationships and help the reconciliation process between the crown and indigenous communities.

Aboriginal communities, industry and others have expressed concerns about Ontario's current approach to consultation. Here are some of the concerns: Aboriginal communities and industry have consistently raised the significance of consultation issues. However, perspectives to date have been very diverse and varied, with no single view on either the problems or the possible solutions.

My ministry has been directed to explore new provincial approaches to aboriginal consultation, including potential supports for aboriginal communities and industry. In order to carry out the work, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, with the active support of other relevant ministries, has established a small and time-limited consultation policy project office. That project office has got a very specific task. It's tasked to work across ministries, with indigenous partners and industry. I always include industry in this—

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'm afraid, Minister, the time is up for the official opposition. We now—

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Chair, sorry to interrupt: Is there any way that we can get the volume turned off on the TV? It's just that I can hear it.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Oh, really, is it? I can't hear it.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Yes. Sorry to interrupt.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): No problem. Thank you for pointing that out.

We now move to the third party. Madame Gélinas.

Hon. David Zimmer: I must be aging. I can't hear a thing.

M^{me} France Gélinas: No comments there.

I would like to talk to you about Mattagami First Nation and an issue that has to do in part with estimates—just so that my colleague can relate to the book of estimates—and that has to do with your Remote Electrification Readiness Program, but specifically for Mattagami First Nation.

Mattagami First Nation answered a request for proposal. The Ministry of Energy issued a request for proposal for 200 megawatts of renewable power in my area; 75 megawatts were to be from hydroelectricity and the other 125 split between wind and solar. Mattagami

worked with OPG, and they put together a proposal for six megawatts of power that would be kind of a run-of-the-river project out of the Mattagami River.

It was a good opportunity for them because, as you know, I have read into the record on a number of occasions the dates, times and durations of power outages, both in Gogama and in Mattagami. The power supply out there—Mattagami especially. If you have ever been there, there's a long, long road; you get to the reserve, and this is where the end of the line for the power is, so they have multiple power failures.

You will also know that they have a hatchery. Right now we have three million little baby pickerel hatching in Mattagami, about to find their way into waters and rivers and lakes.

But coming back, we need to do something to improve electricity distribution to the people in Mattagami. Those power outages are horrible. If any of you have ever had a flat-screen TV, you see what happens when you have multiple power outages. All of your electronics die, one after the other; they don't like that at all. Not only do they have power outages, but they also have brownouts, where the grid simply cannot meet their demand.

So they worked really hard. First, it was to convince the elders that they should build on the Mattagami River. It took a long time, a lot of conversations and a lot of discussions, but all of the elders agreed to build that. Then they had to actually put the plans together as to how they were going to do this hydroelectric project. Then they sent it down to IESO.

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I have the letter here that IESO sent them on March 9—and I would be more than willing to share it with you, if the Clerk would be so nice as to make photocopies—basically telling them that there was no longer sufficient capacity to accommodate their renewable project. What that really means is that they are saving room on the grid for other investors into our electricity system that have guaranteed room on the grid. You and I both know that nobody will ever go to Mattagami to put in a project if it is not run by the First Nations themselves. They need the electricity. They are at the end of a line. They have put forward a strong and robust proposal, in consultation with OPG. Now they're being told that, no, they cannot use the grid.

I know that remote electrification does not directly apply to Mattagami, but the spirit of it does. If you don't have enough electricity, there are lots of economic opportunities that you cannot capitalize on because you don't have enough electricity.

Don't get me wrong: 90% of the people in Gogama have a power generator attached to their house, because in the middle of the winter, when you don't have electricity for three days, the wood stove will only carry you so far. It's not good for the environment to have all of those generators. They are extremely expensive.

Here, they had a First Nations solution to their own issues, to make sure that they have access to electricity that is reliable and that is sufficient to meet their needs as

well as allowing them some pretty creative economic development activities. And none of this is available to them so that somebody down south—that nobody knows anything about—must be guaranteed room on the grid.

They came to me, and I'm coming to you, to ask, how can you support the Remote Electrification Readiness Program? Your government understands how, clearly, if we don't have a reliable supply of electricity into our First Nations, we're holding them back when it comes to everything: when it comes to the health of their community, their social status, when it comes to opportunity for economic development—and then that.

I'll leave you with that, then. Please help.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you very much for that question. I have been to Mattagami First Nation. I was up there just shortly after they had the big train wreck. I had both a walking tour and a helicopter tour up and down the Mattagami River where the train wreck occurred. It occurred right on the bridge near the water.

I also had an opportunity—

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's the Minisnakwa River and not the Mattagami River, but continue.

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes. I also had an opportunity to witness the effects of the forest fire that occurred a couple of years before.

I had a full meeting with Chief Walter Naveau and his council. They raised a host of issues with me, and lots of the issues that you've just raised.

With respect to your question about the electrification issue, that's really a matter for the Ministry of Energy to deal with, and you might want to raise those issues with them.

The Remote Electrification Readiness Program that I talked about yesterday is designed for those First Nations that are not already on the grid. Mattagami is on the grid. The issue is, they're not on it in a sufficient way. But that's a matter that is really outside the scope of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs—

M^{me} France Gélinas: This is the part that I don't get. Why do we have a Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs if it is not to help First Nations when they have problems with the different ministries? In this particular case, they're having a hell of an issue with the Ministry of Energy and climate change. Help me. What's the name of this ministry? Chiarelli, anyway. What's his ministry?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Energy.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Energy. They're having a hell of a time with the Ministry of Energy. They feel that the Ministry of Energy does not understand the reality of what it means to be a First Nation at the end of the grid. To be told by the Ministry of Energy that they have to save room on the grid for a yet-to-be-identified, Samsung-type of a guy to come—so that they would have room, if they so desire—is really disrespectful to First Nations. Nobody will come and put any type of an energy-generating system on a First Nation if it is not the First Nations themselves. Why are we saving room on the grid for anybody? Because the only people who will ever agree to do something are the First Nations themselves. They are kind of turning to you.

You've explained before that you're there to make sure that the different ministries understand the cultural differences, and they understand their duties and how to work fully with First Nations. I think it is worth the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs supporting Mattagami so that they are looked at by the Ministry of Energy through a First Nations lens. To save room on the grid for somebody else may make sense in Mattagami or in Gogama or someplace else, but not on a First Nation. On a First Nation, if it's not them doing that project, it will never get done.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that. As a province, we always support First Nation and Métis participation in the development of energy initiatives. We will continue to review programs and work to improve opportunities for First Nation communities.

As a matter of process, I would urge you, at the first instance, to take that up with the Ministry of Energy. The Ministry of Energy may then have conversations with us, or whatever, but you should raise that in the first instance with the Ministry of Energy.

We are here as a ministry to field inquiries from other ministries, to field inquiries from First Nations and bring the parties together and do what we can to advance the consultation process.

In fact, in the 2016 Ontario budget we announced the creation of the Green Investment Fund, which is a down payment on the province's cap-and-trade. We will be investing \$13 million to support First Nations fighting and adapting to climate change, and to develop micro-grids and energy storage options. That's an important piece.

We're all working to the same end, but I would urge you, as the member, to take this up with the Minister of Energy in the first instance and we'll provide what advice and input is appropriate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I guess this is the part I don't fully understand. I don't understand why the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs is not more proactive to support the First Nations. Why do we have to wait for the Ministry of Energy to say, "Oh, I don't think that we looked at this project through a culturally appropriate lens"? There's a good chance that they will think that their looking at it was through the appropriate lens when it was not.

Why isn't your ministry more proactive in saying, "Ministry of Energy, you looked at this project through the wrong lens. You have to look at this project through a lens that is respectful of First Nations"? A lens respectful of First Nations means that, if there is going to be the building of an energy project on a First Nation, it's going to be First Nations-driven, not anybody else.

Hon. David Zimmer: Sorry, I missed the last part.

M^{me} France Gélinas: If there is going to be an energy project on a First Nation, it's going to be First Nations-driven, not anybody else. Why do we have to wait till the Ministry of Energy sees the error in its ways before you act? Why can you not be proactive and let them know to look at this again through the right lens?

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Hon. David Zimmer: Well, as a matter of fact, Chief Nadeau—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Naveau.

Hon. David Zimmer: —has been in touch with us recently. Tomorrow, I'm in Timmins for a meeting of NAN for the full day. I know that the issue is going to come up tomorrow in Timmins.

But, again, I urge you to take this up with the Ministry of Energy. Our task then is to provide the best advice and assistance we can to other ministries and First Nations on issues like this. We are prepared to do that and we are well equipped to that. That's sort of our core business, if you will.

M^{me} France Gélinas: You have to clarify this. I don't like giving First Nations or anybody else false hope. If the chief and band council of Mattagami have an appointment with you tomorrow, you are raising their expectations that you will do something for them.

But then you sit here and tell me that unless the Ministry of Energy comes to you so that you field this inquiry, nothing will happen. There's a disconnect there.

You cannot first give Chief Naveau false hope that your ministry will do something and then sit here and tell me, "Well, unless the Ministry of Energy asks, we're not going to do anything."

Hon. David Zimmer: Look, these technical questions about the grid or so on are the Ministry of Energy's responsibilities. If the issue is raised by the Ministry of Energy, if the issue is raised, or has been raised by, Chief Nadeau, I have no doubt—

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's Naveau.

Hon. David Zimmer: —Naveau—we'll be talking about it tomorrow. We will provide the best advice that we can on consultation processes and how to move forward in a positive way on this.

But at the end of the day, the process on electricity issues and grid issues and that sort of stuff starts with the Ministry of Energy. I'm sure that the chief has been in touch with the Ministry of Energy, and I look forward to tomorrow's conversation.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The \$13 million to support First Nations in renewable energy: Is this something that will apply to Mattagami, or that Mattagami could apply for?

Hon. David Zimmer: That fund of \$13 million was announced in the 2016 budget. We are working out the details of how that \$13 million is going to be spent or used or allocated.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: When can we expect to know more about which First Nations will be eligible and what kind of projects would be eligible to apply for some of that \$13 million to support First Nations in the green economy?

Hon. David Zimmer: As you know, the budget was just passed a couple of months ago. We are in the process now. We have made that commitment of the \$16 million. You will appreciate that there a lot of entities that would

like to participate in that funding. We are sorting out the details of how that is going to be administered and allocated.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay. I will use my one minute to finish.

The spirit behind the Remote Electrification Readiness Program, I fully understand. I live in the north. I know what "remote" means and I know what not having a connection to the grid means. But when you are connected to the grid in a way that does not allow you to rely on electricity, you're still at a huge disadvantage. This is what Mattagami deals with all the time. They are the end of the line.

Hon. David Zimmer: And those are exactly the kinds of issues that we are working with our whole-of-government approach to correct and to bring the proper balance to so that all First Nations, whether it's Mattagami or any other First Nations, have the right to enjoy the benefits that everybody else does in Ontario of good electricity supply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: You have an opportunity to do this by supporting this little run-of-the-river project. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you, Madame Gélinas. We now move to the government side: Mrs. McGarry.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Minister and team, for coming to estimates this afternoon.

Minister, going back to last August, 2015, our government signed a historic political accord with the Chiefs of Ontario. As a matter of fact, that ceremony happened right here at Queen's Park, and it was a good day to celebrate that. In the accord, we committed to working together with First Nations to strengthen the treaty relationship and to address issues such as resource benefits and revenue sharing. We also talked about jurisdictional matters that involve First Nations and Ontario.

I also understand that this is something that was requested by First Nations leadership to create a more formal and bilateral relationship with the province at the political level that recognizes the First Nations' inherent right to self-government. I know that this is something that has been in the works for quite a while. I also understand that this is the first time in decades that an agreement like this has been established. As I said, it had been talked about for a long period of time, so it was good to see. It's an agreement that formalizes the Ontario First Nations relationship at the leadership level, and it is framed by the recognition of First Nations' inherent right to self-government.

In saying that, Minister, I understand that, being an historic event, not all of us were part of that ceremony here last August. I'm just wondering what exactly the milestone agreement says and how it will assist in building relationships with the First Nations of Ontario.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question. The signing of the political accord and the conversations and consultations and negotiations and all of the background leading up to the signing of the political accord is,

in my judgment, one of the crowning achievements that this province has reached with its First Nations. I was at the signing ceremony with the Premier and Ontario Regional Chief Day. That was signed on August 24, 2015.

There was a tremendous amount of work that led up to the signing of that accord. I can tell you that that accord now is serving as the bedrock, the foundational document, of the relationship between Ontario and our First Nations. I have a beautifully framed copy of it hanging in my office, but more importantly, a copy of that political accord was sent to every First Nation in Ontario. Since the accord was signed in August 2015, all of the First Nations that I have visited, I get into the band council and do you know what I see on the wall? I see a framed copy of the political accord. First Nations are just as proud of the political accord as we are as a province. It is a foundational document and we are building on that, taking the next steps that would logically follow from the accord that we've signed.

The accord cements the political—sorry, can somebody get me a glass of water? I made the mistake of eating some peanuts before I came in.

The political accord cements the political relationship between the government of Ontario and the First Nations political confederacy. It frames this relationship with the recognition of First Nations' inherent right to self-government and it identifies the treaty relationship as a matter of common priority. The accord provides a platform for First Nations in the province to work together on common priorities, including the treaty relationship, resource benefits and revenue sharing, and jurisdictional matters involving First Nations in Ontario.

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The accord will advance Ontario's relationship with First Nations. This was recently demonstrated through the Leaders in the Legislature event hosted by the Chiefs of Ontario from November 25 to November 26, 2015. This event offered First Nation leaders direct access to various ministers and senior officials from the OPS. That event was held in the Legislature. There were also sidebar meetings near the Legislature and so on. Ten sessions invited First Nation leaders to participate in discussions on priority items: on issues related to health, the environment, youth engagement, economic development, infrastructure, energy, justice and child welfare. On April 18, just last month, 2016, the Premier and I met with the political confederacy to advance the development of strategic, integrated and responsive policies and initiatives across government to improve outcomes for First Nation peoples and create prosperous, healthy and strong communities.

The political accord is aligned with the principles of reconciliation and of mutual collaboration between governments and indigenous peoples. These are all principles that were and are identified in the Truth and Reconciliation's recent call to action.

In the answer that I've just given you, you can see how the political accord serves as a foundational docu-

ment. Since that political accord, as I've said, there have been two major meetings: the one I referred to, November 25 to 26, with the Leaders in the Legislature, and the further meeting with the political confederacy just last month, in April. The idea of those meetings was to start to build on the principles set out in the political accord. We go from the principles in the political accord to details and projects and ideas, and we advance the agenda in that way. That's why it's such an important document, the political accord.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Interestingly, I spent some time with Chief Hill from Six Nations recently. There was a Women in Politics conference for young women in Brantford, just in April. It was a non-partisan event, and it was probably the first time that I've actually been to an event like that, as an elected politician, with a chief of the First Nations. It was a proud moment to be able to share onstage with her just some of the perspectives that we each have as elected officials.

I'd have to say that the young women in the room—because it was mostly a session for high-school-aged students, mostly women, but some men there, some of the members of the community. I'd have to say that most of the questions that came to the panelists on the front of the stage really came to Chief Hill. When they were asking her what some of her priorities were for her areas, some of the things that she was talking about were some of the priorities that were part of the accord that I just heard you talk about—about health care, about issues with young people—which is, I think, a fairly large priority for the group in the room.

It was interesting for me to have that different perspective brought forward in a forum like that. I've lived in that area for a long period of time. We've been down to Six Nations to do different events on heritage and environment issues, and we've connected with folks there regarding some of their environmental concerns, realizing that we had a lot of the shared priorities, leading forward, not just in our own communities, but certainly with the Six Nations.

In saying all that, I just wanted to know how the accord is going to help continue to build the relationships with the First Nations of Ontario, and what further response there has been to this historic document in terms of planning for the future.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that observation. I must say, if you had a chance at the Women in Politics meeting to witness Chief Ava Hill in action and get some of her advice, then you've had the rare opportunity to watch a master politician in action—and I use the words “master politician” in the very best sense of the words. She is one of the dynamic leaders in the First Nations community.

But let me tell you what a number of other chiefs' reactions to the political accord were.

Ontario Regional Chief Day: When we first announced the agreement about the political accord on June 15, Regional Chief Day was quoted as saying, “I am pleased that the First Nations and Ontario have renewed

their relationship. This accord recognizes that First Nations and Ontario must work together to address the pressing needs of our communities. I look forward to working with Ontario in the spirit of the accord.”

Later on, when the accord was actually signed on August 24, Chief Day added this comment: “This political path forward for First Nations in Ontario is the most important collective milestone in modern times. With this accord, First Nations and Ontario have committed to strengthening a new relationship. I look forward to working with Ontario in developing a comprehensive strategy and framework that will fully utilize this accord to advance our jurisdiction and treaty rights....”

The grand chief of Mushkegowuk Council, Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon, lauded the political accord as “a historic step forward for First Nations relations in Ontario.” He has gone on record to say that it is “a step toward a true nation-to-nation treaty relationship desired by First Nations.”

He noted that one of the agreements in principle made in the accord is that First Nations “have an inherent right to self-government” and that the province “will make respecting that right central to its relationship with First Nations.”

I have several here, but let me tell you about Chief Tom Bressette from Kettle and Stony Point. That’s down Ipperwash way, where, as you know, there were a lot of issues over the last decade.

On August 31, the chief of Kettle and Stony Point, Tom Bressette, said that the political accord was “a major step forward in relations between the First Nations and Queen’s Park.” He said that “the Wynne government is more receptive to the issues and needs confronting our province’s First Nations, and has put words into action with the agreement.

“Bressette says he’s happy with the rapid”—rapid—“improvement in relations with the province ... since the Ipperwash crisis....”

One more: Grand Chief Gord Peters, of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, which represents about 20,000 First Nations members from seven member communities, said, “We are in the midst of a changing social and political environment, where First Nations are not alone in the fight to protect our lands, resources and water but are joined by other Canadians to voice our common interests. This accord captures this social shift”—that’s an important concept here—“and is a tremendous step forward in building a new political relationship between First Nations and the government of Ontario.”

Last—I could go on for several pages here, but since you mentioned Chief Ava Hill—Chief Ava Hill, elected chief of the Six Nations of the Grand River, representing the largest population of First Nations in Canada, said, “The signing of this political accord lays the groundwork for a renewed relationship between the First Nations and the province of Ontario. It is an indication that the province is willing to work with First Nations for the betterment of all of our citizens. We welcome their

commitment and look forward to working together on the implementation phase of the articles included in the accord.”

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The accord is this foundational document. I think it’s only appropriate that I take a second and read from the political accord. I’ll leave a copy with the Clerk. It’s signed by Premier Wynne and signed by Ontario Regional Chief Day:

“Whereas the First Nations represented by the Chiefs-in-Assembly (hereinafter ‘the First Nations’) and the government of Ontario (hereinafter ‘Ontario’) wish to move forward together in a spirit of respectful co-existence and with a view to revitalizing the treaty relationship;

“And whereas the First Nations exist as self-governing indigenous nations and peoples with their own governments, cultures, languages, traditions, customs and territories;

“And whereas the Ontario provincial crown’s jurisdiction and legal obligations are determined by the Canadian constitutional framework, which includes the common law and treaties entered into between First Nations and the crown;

“And whereas the First Nations and Ontario recognize the importance of strong First Nations governments in achieving a better quality of life for First Nations and creating a better future for First Nations children and youth;

“And whereas this accord expresses the political commitment of the First Nations and Ontario and will guide our positive working relationship. It is not intended to impact the interpretation of the rights, legal obligations or jurisdiction of the First Nations or Ontario.”

Those are the “whereases.” Here are the five points in the accord:

“Now therefore the First Nations and Ontario agree”—take note of this:

“(1) That First Nations have an inherent right to self-government and that the relationship between Ontario and the First Nations must be based upon respect for this right. An inherent right to self-government may be given legal effect by specific rights recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982”—

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Minister, just to let you know, you have just over two minutes left.

Hon. David Zimmer: —“or through negotiated agreements and legislation;

“(2) To build upon and link to existing bilateral or other community-led initiatives established between First Nations and Ontario;

“(3) To host a meeting, at least twice per year, between the leadership of the political confederacy and the Premier and an agenda item which will include the joint assessment on the progress on the identified priorities and issues;

“(4) To work together to identify and address common priorities and issues that will include, but are not limited to, the treaty relationship, resource benefits and revenue

sharing and jurisdictional matters involving First Nations and Ontario; and

“(5) To work to resolve key challenges and impasses that impact the parties, including but not limited to, exploring the potential for the use of alternative dispute resolution processes”—August 24, 2015.

That political accord is now the foundation for our reconciliation and the development, in a good way, with our First Nation communities.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: That’s fantastic. Interestingly, I saw Chief Hill a couple of nights ago. She was invited to the Queen’s 90th celebration that Lieutenant Governor Dowdeswell was hosting. She actually sat in the box with her. I thought that that was a good place for her.

It’s interesting that you talk about that because I live alongside the Grand River. It is actually a heritage river under the national heritage rivers coalition. I know that I’ve been noticing, even in our own press and our own media, when issues around the Grand River—a few years ago, building a bridge or other issues around Grand River—how much attention was paid to where our First Nations were on the issues. That has been a change over the last, probably, four to five years that I’ve noted. I would think that some of the work that has been undergone leading up to the accord has really highlighted the fact that First Nation treaty rights and common priorities are essential for all of us to work together to ensure that we’ve got the best solutions going forward with First Nation peoples.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I’m afraid your time is basically up. You’ve got one second left, so it’s gone.

We now move to the official opposition: Mr. Miller.

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, I’d like to keep going where I was, on the topic of the duty to consult.

August, 2015: News reports emerged that the Chiefs of Ontario raised concerns regarding the lack of consultation with First Nations about the sale of Hydro One.

Chief Day was quoted as saying, “There was virtually nothing leading up to (the sale), and we know the transmittal of that sale has begun through legislation.

“There was a very big opportunity and responsibility from the Ontario government that just didn’t occur.”

Minister, why didn’t you consult with First Nations on the sale of Hydro One?

Hon. David Zimmer: I’m going to be very precise and clear in my answer here.

The signing of the political accord between Ontario and the Chiefs of Ontario demonstrated our shared commitment to work together to address common priorities and issues as we continue down the path of reconciliation. Ontario is committed to working with the Chiefs of Ontario to explore their interest in the broadening of Hydro One ownership to advance our mutual interests of economic development and wealth creation for the collective benefit of the 133 First Nation communities in Ontario. The detailed information is disclosed in Hydro One’s IPO prospectus, the initial price offering.

Mr. Norm Miller: So that’s happening now, but you didn’t consult about the fact that you were going to sell Hydro One. I understand—and that’s actually the next point I want to get to—that it is in the prospectus.

There’s an article written by Steve Paikin on that topic. In the article, he says, “For example, I am reliably advised that cabinet has been considering a request by the Chiefs of Ontario to share in the revenue windfall from the partial sale of Hydro One, and that the Premier is in favour of doing so. The rationale is that some of the electricity transmission company’s wires are on traditional First Nations territory, and therefore indigenous Canadians argue they’re entitled to a share of the revenue.”

It goes on: “‘The province has indicated that it is in discussions regarding potential equity participation by the First Nations,’ the prospectus says”—as you were indicating.

“However, given the length of the document, and the lack of coverage given to those discussions, it’s possible some cabinet ministers felt blindsided by the revelation. Last August, the Toronto Star reported that the Chiefs of Ontario were offended that the government hadn’t consulted them adequately about the potential sale of Hydro One, but there was no reference in that article to the chiefs being granted any equity participation in the sale.

“The province and the chiefs are now negotiating over the matter....”

Can you update us on the state of those negotiations about equity participation?

Hon. David Zimmer: I can tell you that the Chiefs of Ontario, the Minister of Energy and the Ministry of Energy civil servants are engaged in active discussions. I think it’s important now that we let the respective negotiating teams negotiate the best solution to that. I would ask you to direct any further questions on this issue to the Ministry of Energy.

Mr. Norm Miller: There have already been two sections or percentages of it sold off, so I would think these negotiations are going to have to happen fairly quickly. I don’t know the exact timetable of the sale of the rest of Hydro One—up to 60%—but it seems to me that, yes, they’d have to be faster than some other negotiations have been.

Continuing on the consultation theme, we talked a bit about this the other day, but I just want to get what is your response to noted aboriginal affairs expert Dwight Newman, professor of law and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Rights at the University of Saskatchewan, regarding his views on the duty-to-consult framework, where he states, “Many in the resource sector find the expectations still extremely vague, while advocates for some aboriginal communities find the legislation so weak they are raising the prospect of putting constitutional challenges to it.”

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He went on further, again talking about the case of Northern Superior Resources, stating, “The province of Ontario informally tried to encourage companies working on projects to consult with communities in the area, even

though the Supreme Court of Canada in its 2004 Haida Nation decision specifically decided that third parties do not owe a duty to consult and that the duty ultimately rests on the crown, subject to decisions it might make to delegate ‘procedural’ aspects.”

What’s your response to Professor Newman’s feelings on the matter?

Hon. David Zimmer: That’s precisely the reason why we’ve set up the consultation policy project office. I talked about that earlier this afternoon. I talked about that yesterday. That’s a project that is being led by the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. It’s a project we’re working with other ministries, with First Nations and with industry on to refine, develop and enhance our consultation process so that all interested parties get to the best possible result. That’s the whole idea of doing the consultation review: to get the best possible model for consultation that we can.

Mr. Norm Miller: I would say that it’s an urgent matter, really, for the province of Ontario, so I hope the time frame is clearly succinct, because it is really important.

Last week I was in Timmins. I heard you’re going up to Timmins tomorrow.

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes.

Mr. Norm Miller: I was there last week for the FONOM conference and I toured Lake Shore Gold at that time. One of the issues they brought up was that they’re doing a minor expansion of a tailings pond, and the process of duty to consult even for that—which, frankly, I was surprised they needed to on an existing tailings pond that they are just expanding a little bit—had them concerned that they wouldn’t actually be able to do it this year because they’ll miss the building season.

It’s something that affects every project around northern Ontario in particular, so I hope that you’re on that and working to make it happen quickly.

Hon. David Zimmer: We are on that like a dog on a bone.

Mr. Norm Miller: Okay. I’m going to switch topics now to the Ring of Fire. In August 2014, the summer of 2014, there was a press release from the Ontario government saying, “Ontario Establishes Ring of Fire Infrastructure Development Corp.

“Ontario has taken another step to drive progress in the Ring of Fire region, delivering on its July 3, 2014, commitment to establish a development corporation within 60 days.

“With headquarters to be located in Thunder Bay, the [Ring of Fire] Infrastructure Development Corp. will work to bring First Nations and the public and private sectors together to create partnerships and facilitate investment decisions in strategic transportation infrastructure.

“The not-for-profit corporation has an interim board of four Ontario public servants. The board will put the necessary structures in place in order to allow for partners to determine their participation in the corporation. This includes working with key partners including First

Nations, industry, communities, and the federal government, to formalize partnerships through the corporation, and overseeing an economic and technical baseline feasibility report on transportation infrastructure.

“As participation in the corporation evolves, the board of directors will be broadened to include membership from First Nations and industry partners. In its mature state, the corporation will be in a position to advise on crucial infrastructure investment decisions, including how to best utilize Ontario’s \$1-billion commitment to Ring of Fire infrastructure.”

That was back in 2014, when the Ring of Fire development corporation was announced with the press release. That press release said that it would work to bring First Nations and public and private sectors together. How has the development corporation succeeded in involving First Nations groups?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question, Mr. Miller. First of all, on the technical aspect of your question—that is, the structure of the corporation itself—I’d ask you to take that up with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Having said that, let me give you some background on how the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs interacts or is involved in this process.

The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs collaborates with the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines by providing advice and support on consultation, regional and social infrastructure, resource revenue-sharing and tripartite governance. Our ministry is a very active partner in supporting the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines in its efforts to make development in the Ring of Fire a reality. In the provincial budget released in February 2016, Ontario reconfirmed that it’s willing to commit up to \$1 billion towards infrastructure development. Ontario is prepared to meet its commitment of \$1 billion towards strategic infrastructure development in the Ring of Fire.

I can tell you, Mr. Miller, that the staff from my ministry participate in a number of multi-ministry working groups that are in turn led by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, which are currently supporting infrastructure planning and socio-economic support for First Nations located in the Ring of Fire region. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs assists the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines in supporting the facilitation of capacity support and socio-economic opportunities for First Nations impacted by the Ring of Fire development. My ministry’s funding supports Ring of Fire communities and enhances the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines’ efforts and investments.

Mr. Norm Miller: On that, how much money has gone to support communities in the Ring of Fire for capacity-building?

Hon. David Zimmer: I can tell you that the Matawa tribal council, which is the tribal council to which the nine First Nations in the Ring of Fire area belong, have received a total of \$99,963 from the Aboriginal Economic Development Fund from 2014 to 2015 and 2015 to 2016. That is to support them in their efforts in the work

that they have to do to participate in this Ring of Fire development exercise.

First Nation communities in the Ring of Fire region also receive funding from the New Relationship Fund, which is designed to support their participation, consultation and engagement with the government and the private sector on land and resource matters. I can tell you that through the New Relationship Fund, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs has invested just under \$3.4 million over four years.

Mr. Norm Miller: That was \$3.4 million, sir?

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes, \$3.4 million—

Mr. Norm Miller: And that's again to the Matawa nations—

Hon. David Zimmer: —over four years. That began in 2014 and that was distributed to the Matawa communities, that is, the nine First Nations in the Ring of Fire.

Mr. Norm Miller: Is that to help them with their negotiations and capacity-building?

Hon. David Zimmer: It's for what we refer to as capacity-building so that they have the capacity to effectively engage in consultations and negotiations with other entities involved in the Ring of Fire development.

Mr. Norm Miller: Back to the development corporation. Are there currently any First Nation representatives on the board of directors of the development corporation for the Ring of Fire?

Hon. David Zimmer: As I said in my opening comments to your question, the details of the corporate structure are something that you're going to have to inquire about at the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

Mr. Norm Miller: Surely the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines would advise the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs if they've accomplished that goal of First Nation participation on this important board of directors?

Hon. David Zimmer: We provide consultation and our best advice to other ministries, but this is something that you should take up with the minister of mines, on the details of the corporate structure.

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Mr. Norm Miller: What you're saying is you're not aware if there are any First Nation representatives on the board of directors of the Ring of Fire development corporation.

Hon. David Zimmer: No, that's not what I said. I said you should—

Mr. Norm Miller: If you know that there is, please tell me that there is.

Hon. David Zimmer: Take up this question about the corporate structure of the company with the Minister of Mines.

Mr. Norm Miller: I would say it's not a question about the corporate structure; it's a question of if there are any First Nation representatives on the board of directors. Are they actually in place? Because I know originally, as the press release said, it was four civil

servants to begin with. That was in 2014. We're now in 2016, so I'm asking if progress has been made—

Hon. David Zimmer: You know, Mr. Miller, you've been in business yourself. You know that if you want the answer to that question, you can do a corporate search and it will tell you who's on the board of directors and all of that technical—

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm talking to the president right now, so I figured the minister would know, as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: In this case, I'm not going to save you the couple of dollars to do a corporate search.

Mr. Norm Miller: I would have thought that would be something you would be proud to share with us, Minister.

I have another question about the billion dollars that you reference that's been in the budget now for, I think, at least three years. When are you anticipating that that will be spent to actually do something on the ground, to open up access to this really important project? I think you would agree that it's a very important project. It's going to benefit those communities that are close to the Ring of Fire probably the most.

Hon. David Zimmer: Ontario was first off the mark with our commitment for \$1 billion for infrastructure. That commitment was renewed most recently in the last budget. You know that \$1-billion commitment that we were looking for—the matching commitment, if you will, from the previous federal government. That got stalled because your federal party came up with a paltry \$23 million, which was—well, I won't comment any more on that.

But we do have a new federal partner in Ottawa who is much more engaged on this issue of the Ring of Fire than the previous government. We are hopeful that things will move along in a positive way.

Mr. Norm Miller: I know I was asked about this question as northern critic as well, and my response was that if I was the federal government, I'd want to see a plan from the provincial government before I invested in the development. It's the provincial government's responsibility to come up with a plan.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: Two minutes? It's flying by.

Hon. David Zimmer: In answer to that question, there's a provincial part to play, there's a federal party to play, there's a First Nations part to play and there's an industry part to play. There are four parties. It's not a question of the province going ahead with its plan, or the feds, or any one of the parties. A project of that magnitude requires the parties to sit down with the private sector that may or may not be involved, and to come up with a plan. It's not that one party dictates the model to the other parties involved.

Mr. Norm Miller: I note that in the area, some of the First Nations are not feeling like they're engaged. The chief of Neskantaga, Peter Moonias, said on March 24, 2015, "The Ontario government has put 'a gun to the

head' of First Nations leaders trying to negotiate a fair deal in the Ring of Fire mining area in the James Bay lowlands...." He goes on: "There's a hidden agenda,' he said. 'We are being targeted with a gun to our head. We have no more opportunity to study the process.'"

Have you gone to Neskantaga and met with the chief and tried to build good relations there? It doesn't sound like he's very positive, based on this media reporting.

Hon. David Zimmer: I talked yesterday and today about consultation, engagement and doing it in a meaningful way. There are nine First Nations that we're engaged with. We're engaged with the federal government and we're engaged with other entities up there—

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Minister and Mr. Miller, your time is up. At this point, we'll move on to Madame Gélinas.

M^{me} France Gélinas: This round of questioning will have to do with health and health-related issues on First Nations. The first one is, at the base of every human being, in order to be healthy, you need to have access to clean water. I was happy to hear you say in your opening statement—you mentioned how access to safe drinking water on-reserve is a priority for your ministry. The first question should be quite easy, but I couldn't find it by myself, which is why I'm asking it: How much of the 2015-16 as well as the 2016-17 Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs budget has been spent on improving water quality on one of the 79 First Nations that is on a boil-water advisory?

Hon. David Zimmer: Let me give you a background answer—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Will it have an amount of money in the discourse at some point, to answer my question?

Hon. David Zimmer: As I said yesterday, clean water is top of everyone's mind in Ontario—all the First Nations, all Ontarians. It's also top of mind for the federal government.

As you know, water issues on-reserve are a federal responsibility. Having said that, as I said yesterday, we work closely and we work in co-operation and collaboration with First Nations and our federal partners on these issues. We are very encouraged by the statements that have come out of the new federal government on the necessity to deal with the water issue. Our government—and I'm sure I speak for the federal government—we want to ensure that all residents of Ontario, be they on- or off-reserve, or anywhere in the province, have access to clean drinking water.

M^{me} France Gélinas: But Minister, you and I both know that for 79 First Nation communities, it is not the case. I mean, you can open up the estimates book—which is what we are here to do, is to talk about estimates—and right at the beginning, it says as a priority, "make substantive progress in improving drinking water on reserves." Then in your opening remarks, you said the exact same thing. You mentioned how access to safe drinking water on-reserve is a priority for you.

I'm happy that it could be a priority for the federal government and everybody else, but I'm asking you.

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm going to ask the deputy to speak to that, because as I said, it's a question of a federal responsibility. But having said that, the province does have an interest, because these are Ontario residents.

We have been working with the federal government on a plan. There's a plan that has been tabled with the federal government to address these issues. I'm going to ask the deputy to speak to the details of that plan that has been tabled.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you.

Ms. Deborah Richardson: First Nations infrastructure on-reserve is a federal responsibility. Where the province—

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me; sorry. It's the first time you've spoken today. Can you introduce yourself?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Sorry. This is Deputy Minister Deborah Richardson.

Federal infrastructure on-reserve for water treatment plants is a federal responsibility within First Nations communities. Where Ontario has the expertise is the technology. We have many very sophisticated companies and technologies that do exist. What we did is we reached out to Canada to develop a bit of an action plan about how we could provide some expertise from Ontario to support First Nations and Canada.

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There recently was a tripartite meeting with Canada, Ontario and First Nations. Of course, MOECC is also working on that. They have the capacity and the expertise, more than aboriginal affairs would do. But we've been facilitating all of the partners to come together.

I don't know, Matt, if there's any additional—this is Matt Garrow, and he'll introduce himself. He's really sort of leading this within the ministry. He can speak to more specifics.

Mr. Matt Garrow: Matt Garrow, director of strategic planning and economic policy, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

As the deputy said, it is primarily the lead of MOECC right now with those discussions with INAC and also with—I'm not sure if I have to pull that up. So the offering we have to those discussions is the tremendous amount of expertise held by Ontario and by MOECC. That's not inconsequential. I think that it is something that's of value to both the First Nations and to those discussions.

M^{me} France Gélinas: So you have a facilitated multi-partite meetings from which the federal government through their Indian affairs, through the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change—are you yourself, as in your ministry, at that table?

Mr. Matt Garrow: We were at the first meeting about two weeks ago in Thunder Bay. The ADM, Alison Pilla, was in attendance and participated in those discussions. They were all day with the Chiefs of Ontario,

select First Nations leadership and the feds—the federal government, sorry.

M^{me} France Gélinas: How much of the private sector expertise were there?

Mr. Matt Garrow: At that particular meeting, none that I know of. There could be, but I wasn't privy to those details.

M^{me} France Gélinas: For some of the First Nations, boil-water advisories—there are people close to my age, and that's all they've ever had. They have never been able to drink water out of the tap. They have been on boil-water advisories for decades.

They read in the ministry statement that your priority is to make substantive progress in improving drinking water on-reserve. Those words mean that you will facilitate—what do those words really mean?

Hon. David Zimmer: Sorry. Your question is to?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Whoever wants to answer.

Hon. David Zimmer: I keep repeating—and we've all said, and I think that you know and understand—that the federal government has the first responsibility, if you will, for drinking water on reserves. As the deputy has said, and as I have said, and as Mr. Garrow has said, Ontario is very committed to working with Canada and our First Nations to deal with this water issue.

Interestingly enough, it's an issue that even the former Prime Minister and the Premier agreed on: Something had to be done about the water issue. Then we had a change of government in Ottawa, and if anything, the recognition of the immediacy of the issue has even been ramped up.

Ontario has demonstrated its commitment in many ways about how it's going to provide support to First Nations. The Ontario Clean Water Agency provides operations and maintenance services on a fee-for-service basis. The Walkerton Clean Water Centre provides operator training on a cost-recovery basis. The Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change has provided engineering and technical advice to First Nations and carries out the conformance reviews of proposals for First Nations systems upon request. There are seven First Nations included in the Showcasing Water Innovation program, in which Ontario is funding innovative, cost-effective solutions for managing drinking water, waste water and storm water systems. I can tell you that the Canada-Ontario First Nations drinking water improvement initiative is a partnership with four small First Nations communities to provide new and innovative solutions to improve drinking water quality.

The Clean Water Act itself provides a mechanism for the involvement of First Nations in watershed-based source protection plans, and both Canada and Ontario have partnered through the Small Communities Fund to provide funding for priority public infrastructure projects.

First Nations water projects are also eligible to receive funding under the Small Communities Fund of the federal Building Canada program, for which Ontario contributes one third of the funding and participating

communities finance one third of their project costs, as well. So we are—

M^{me} France Gélinas: That was my original question. I want to know how much money Ontario spent to help First Nations gain access to clean water, especially those First Nations that have not had access to clean water and are under boil-water advisories. So you're telling me that there is one program, the small communities program, where Ontario pays one third of the cost? How much did we spend last year on this program? Where did the money go?

Hon. David Zimmer: For the answer to that question, you'd want to examine the estimates or raise that question with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change for the precise numbers that you're asking about.

M^{me} France Gélinas: So you guys put out words that say that it is a priority for you, but you couldn't name for me which First Nations got helped or what kind of financial support they got? How could it be a priority when you know nothing about it?

Hon. David Zimmer: No, look: We have a whole-government approach, so the finances for this and the numbers and so on flow through the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. The question should be directed to that ministry. Ontario and Canada have also partnered through the Small Communities Fund to provide funding for priority public infrastructure projects. First Nations are encouraged to apply for funding to improve drinking water management systems on reserve. There are about half a dozen First Nations participating in that fund.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Would you be so kind as to let me know which are the half-dozen communities and how much money was spent? We are in estimates. This is your portfolio. You name it as one of your priorities, not only in the estimates books but in your opening statement. It seems like it's not a big stretch. I don't understand why there is so much reluctance in showing this. You should be proud of what you've done. Getting water on reserves is something we've all been wanting.

You're getting a few successes, but it's as if your ministry doesn't care. They don't know which First Nations—

Hon. David Zimmer: I take great exception to that.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sure. Well, then, spit it out.

Hon. David Zimmer: I have told you that the estimates of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs are what we're here to examine. We help all other ministries, and I've gone through various projects and so on that we're involved in. But the funding for those projects flows through—in this case, I have referred you to the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. For the dollar amounts and so forth and so on, you should direct your questions to the estimates of that ministry.

M^{me} France Gélinas: How about the names of the First Nations?

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes, I do have that.

Mr. Matt Garrow: The four First Nations are Alderville, Lac Seul, Munsee-Delaware and—

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Ms. Deborah Richardson: Zhiibaahaasing.

Mr. Matt Garrow: Zhiibaahaasing.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay. Say the first one again?

Mr. Matt Garrow: Alderville.

M^{me} France Gélinas: That's only four. You said six.

Mr. Matt Garrow: If the minister said four initially—I think it might have changed halfway through.

Interjections.

Mr. Matt Garrow: So there's two additional—well, we have different First Nations; I'm sorry. Those are the four I have.

M^{me} France Gélinas: We only know of four? And for those four, were they for a water treatment plant or for clean drinking water or for all of the above?

Hon. David Zimmer: As I said just a few minutes ago, Canada and Ontario have partnered through that Small Communities Fund to provide funding for priority infrastructure projects, and I emphasize “priority.” I expect water is a priority. First Nations are encouraged to apply for funding to improve drinking water management systems on reserve. Currently, the following First Nations are participating in the fund: Whitesand, Six Nations, Big Grassy, Georgina Island and Nigigoonsim-inikaaning—am I close?

Ms. Deborah Richardson: Yes.

Hon. David Zimmer: And Naicatchewenin. I can give you the spelling, if you like.

Mr. Matt Garrow: If I could say, the four First Nations I referenced were in reference to the Canada-Ontario First Nations drinking water improvement initiative, which is separate and distinct from the fund that the minister just referenced.

Hon. David Zimmer: The point here is that we are doing things to address the clean-drinking-water issue. I've referenced a number of funds. Mr. Garrow has mentioned a number of funds. The federal government is engaged with this. We are all working towards the same purpose. The details of the dollar amounts and when and how the money flows and so forth and so on are to be found in other ministries' estimates.

It's much like the thing yesterday about the treaty piece. I think there was a question from someone about where we had the treaty money. There was a placeholder, and the money may flow in and out. So you really want to check the other ministries' estimates on this.

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Madame Gélinas, just to let you know, there are three minutes left.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay. I'm not going to go on to another topic. I'm going to stay on this.

Help me understand. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs—you would figure that this is where the information about what's going on with First Nations is collected and is gathered so that you can see the gaps, so you can push where things need to be pushed.

I know that clean drinking water is a priority, because it is said in your mandate letter, it is said in the document when you open it, and you said it in the beginning of your opening remarks that it is a priority. So I hear you,

and First Nations hear you too. But then, when we ask for action, as simple as which ones have participated in a program that the government of Ontario funds to get clean drinking water, I feel like I'm pulling teeth here. What am I doing wrong? We're at estimates. I want to know where the money that comes from the government went to help First Nations on a priority as high as clean drinking water, but yet I had to go at it for 20 minutes to get you to spit out the names of four First Nations.

Hon. David Zimmer: I take exception to your characterization of that. I made it clear right from the get-go that a priority for this government was clean drinking water for First Nations. It's a priority for First Nations, it's a priority for Ontario, it's a priority for the federal government, it's a priority for our Premier, and indeed—

M^{me} France Gélinas: And I hear you saying all this, but—

Hon. David Zimmer: Well, let me answer the question. Do you want to hear—

M^{me} France Gélinas: No. No, I don't.

Hon. David Zimmer: You don't want to hear the answer?

M^{me} France Gélinas: No, I don't.

Hon. David Zimmer: Well, then, don't ask the question.

M^{me} France Gélinas: You know, what I got out of this is that we have 79 First Nations on a boil-water advisory. Out of questioning you for 20 minutes, I got that two out of the 79 on a boil-water advisory are being helped some, but I don't even know if it's for clean drinking water or if it's for treatment of sewage water. I have no idea, with the other 77 that are on a boil-water advisory, what is being done to help them. Although we hear that it's a priority for your government and for your Premier, it's a priority for all of us but we still don't see a plan and we still cannot see how much money—

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'm afraid your time is up, Madame Gélinas.

We now go to the government side. Mr. Thibeault?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Aanii, Minister and deputy ministers. One of the things I always like to do, Minister, is when I start—and I know we always have your staff here—is just to, first off, thank your staff for the great work that they do. I know that my office has consulted with your office on many issues working within our First Nations over the last little bit. Your staff has always been so helpful. I just wanted to publicly acknowledge the great staff that you have and the help they provide, not just to my office but to all MPP offices when working with our First Nations both on-reserve and urban as well. Thanks for that, Minister.

Just a very quick question: How many First Nations are there in Ontario in terms of reserves?

Hon. David Zimmer: One hundred and thirty-three, of which three do not have a land mass.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I believe one of the commitments that you've made, and I know you've been working hard at it, is to try and visit every single First Nation. Is that correct?

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes. As I said yesterday in my remarks, as of two weeks ago, I had 63 on-site visits at First Nations. Some of those First Nations I've visited two or three times. Particularly up in your neck of the woods, there have been multiple visits to the same First Nations.

I can tell you that my chief of staff just briefed me earlier today, and in the next week or two I'll be doing another five First Nations. I believe they're going to be in your area, the Sudbury area. By then, that will be up to 68. I have a commitment on which I'm going to break my back, if I have to, to get to all 130 First Nations that have a land mass.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I ask those questions, Minister, just because I think it's paramount for us to emphasize the work that you and your ministry are doing in ensuring that it's reaching out to every First Nation across the province, and doing the best we can to ensure that we're working with them, we're listening to them and we're consulting with them. I think that's extremely important.

I'm going to talk specifically a little bit about treaty awareness. I think it's important for me to highlight—I think it was January, the last time you made it up into the Greater Sudbury area. We went out to Wahnapiatae First Nation. It was a great visit that we had with Wahnapiatae First Nation. We drove out there and spent the whole day with Chief Ted Roque. I think Councillor Bob Pitfield was there, and a few other of the councillors. We were able to see a lot of the things that Wahnapiatae First Nation is doing. I see them as a leader within First Nations, not only in northeastern Ontario, but some of the things that they're doing throughout the province as a First Nations group.

I wear my hat sometimes as an MPP and sometimes as the PA to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Wahnapiatae First Nation has its own sustainable development corporation that's doing some great work. This department is responsible for the management of the lands and the resources that the Wahnapiatae First Nation territory has within its boundaries. We saw that great video of how they're starting to look at bringing tourists and other folks into their area and trying to continue to work on enhancing their relationship with the community, the relationship with their land and the relationship with tourists. And I know that their primary objective through their sustainable development corporation is to effectively manage their territories so that they can develop the resources available for future generations.

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They have a fantastic relationship, Minister—and I know you're well aware of this, but for those that are listening—with Glencore. Glencore has the nickel rim mine that they share with Wahnapiatae First Nation. That is just a fantastic relationship to see. I know that Glencore and a few other of those mining companies have worked with Wahnapiatae First Nation and, in conjunction, built that fantastic office—but there is another name for it that they called it. When we walked in, they had the Glencore paddle and the Ontario government paddle and

the canoe there. The community can go there and get service. For me, that was one of the first times I had the opportunity to go there and learn, and I thought, "You know what? This is a fantastic thing for us to be able to share with other First Nations across the province." So I was very proud to be able to be there with you and to learn.

We also, if you recall, Minister, took that tour, and they brought us into the elders' room and a few other places. Then they brought us back to one of their offices, where they had that map of every—what is it? Is it every single treaty? Maybe you can explain the map again for me? Is it every single treaty that's—

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I think that was important for us to be able to see—and how proud they were to say that they have this map and that they share it. I think you told me that it's something that this ministry has made sure that we've spent money on and got it out to schools and those types of things, too. Is that correct, Minister?

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Great. I know that even with Wahnapiatae First Nation, we heard how great it was that we were working with them, talking about treaties and working on some of those issues. And so, Minister, we know that treaties with indigenous peoples were foundational for the development of this country and continue to inform how we all live and work together in Ontario.

I know we've all heard the phrase, "We are all treaty people," which speaks to the unique relationship of the people living in Canada. And I know, Minister, that treaties are solemn agreements to live together on this land through a formal exchange of promises that create rights and responsibilities for Canada, for Ontario and for First Nations. Both the Ipperwash Inquiry Report and the recent Executive Summary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian residential schools highlighted, Minister, the need for public awareness of our shared history in order to support reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians.

So, Minister, I think one of my first questions will be if you could outline for us what Ontario is doing to revitalize the treaty relationship and promote awareness of treaties and indigenous rights in provincial schools and amongst the general public. Minister, I'll hand that to you.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you very much for that question. I do want to speak about treaty awareness, but I want to recognize and comment on that visit that you and I, ministry staff and some of my political staff paid to Wahnapiatae First Nation because, in many ways, the way that visit was structured is exactly what First Nations and the government of Ontario are trying to do on this awareness issue. I'll come to the treaty piece in just a second.

The Wahnapiatae First Nation are so—let me just back that up a bit because it'll give me an opportunity. The question came up yesterday from member Gélinas about how one gets to understand a community. I talked

yesterday about the preparation that goes into one of these visits. We've done 63—soon to be 68—and we'll go from there. We do an extensive staff briefing about the First Nation. We develop a profile of the First Nation. We develop an issues profile of the First Nation. We look at a whole host of information so that by the time we arrive at the First Nation, we have a very good idea of what is happening or what the issues are of the First Nations. But once we get there, we sit down—as we sat down, Mr. Thibeault—in their council chambers around the board table. We have an agenda that has been worked out with, in this case, the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the government, and we hear about their issues. They have a host of issues that they want to raise, and they also comment on the issues that we've raised. Frankly, those discussions are so frank and so productive that we often have a different perspective from them on an issue that we, as a government, have. That's a good thing, because then we talk about those different perspectives and we reach a common understanding. It's good for both parties. It's good for First Nations and it's good for government.

The Wahnapiatae First Nation are so proud of their First Nation. You will recall that joining us at the meeting was a graduate student from Queen's University, an archeologist who was working on her master's thesis. She had done the coursework, and now she was doing research. She was not First Nations herself—I don't think she was, although I stand to be corrected on that; she may have been, I'm not sure. I stand to be corrected.

But the point is—

M^{me} France Gélinas: She's First Nation.

Hon. David Zimmer: Sorry?

M^{me} France Gélinas: She's First Nation.

Hon. David Zimmer: She is? Ah, you know who I—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, of course.

Hon. David Zimmer: She participated in the conversations, especially when we got around to cultural issues, because she was working on a program to identify sites along the French River of pictographs, which are ancient paintings on the rock wall. We had quite a conversation about that.

Then, after we discussed a number of the issues—you were there for the full discussion of those issues, and I thank you for taking the time out of your schedule to join us there—the chief and some of his councillors and deputy chief took us on a full tour. Not only did they tell us about what was happening but we then went out and had a chance to see what was happening. This is what awareness is all about: It's understanding the community.

With respect to the treaties, this past year—and I think that a treaty map was sent to all of the MPP offices. It's a great map. I talked about it yesterday. It's twice the size of that flat screen up there. On the lower left-hand corner, the 133 First Nations are listed alphabetically, A through Z. On the map, the map is colour-coded by treaty area. There are 43 treaties, everything from Treaty 3 in the northwest to Treaty 9 in the far, far north to the multiple

treaties in the south. Then within that colour-coding is the designation of the 130 land-based reserves.

That map hung on my wall, and in consultation with the Minister of Education and the Premier, we set aside a budget to reproduce those maps and send them out to all 5,200 or 5,300 elementary and high schools, with the direction that the map be posted in a prominent place in the school and that a lecture, a seminar, a talk or an awareness piece be given at the school—age-appropriate, so elementary through to the 12th grade. In fact, I exercised a little bit of ministerial prerogative there, and the first formal unveiling of a school map was at an elementary school in Willowdale. We arranged for one of the elders from the Mississaugas of the New Credit to come, as did Justice—he did the Ipperwash Inquiry—

Interjection: Sidney Linden.

Hon. David Zimmer: Justice Linden came. It was most interesting. In Willowdale, there's quite an ethnic mix. This class, they were 10 or 11 years of age. It was about equal portions of Caucasian, Chinese, Korean and Iranian. The kids sat around in the classroom, and the elder first opened the the lecture, if you will, with a traditional smudge ceremony. That generated a tremendous amount of questioning and inquiry from these young inquiring minds. They'd never seen it before. Particularly those children in the room who were children of recent immigrants to Canada, they were just taken by that exercise. Then the elder went on to explain the map and give an explanation of the relationship of First Nations and indigenous views. Then Justice Linden talked about some of the sadder chapters in history. He talked about the Ipperwash report—at an age-appropriate level.

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I looked around the room, and there were a lot of parents in the room, because it had been advertised, and there were teachers; there were probably a dozen or 15 teachers in the room. The teachers—they're all adults, of course—were every bit as interested in the explanations that were provided by the elder and Justice Linden about the map.

I can tell you that we sent out, as I said, about 5,200 or 5,300 of those maps. But the word has gotten out broadly in Ontario, in the corporate world, in the homes and in the faith communities and so on. We now have 11,000 maps that we've had printed and which are in the process of being issued, because people are starting to call in and say, "I saw the map. I heard about the map. My son told me." "I'm a business owner," or, "I have a corporation," or, "I'm with a law firm downtown. I would like one of those maps for my office."

There's a sense out there in the broad community that we are at a tipping point in our relationship with the First Nations, and the tipping point—things will tip in a good way. They're going to tip in a good way because of this heightened awareness.

You turn on the electronic media of your choice, or pick up the print media of your choice, or the chatter around your friends in Sudbury or your colleagues in

Kitchener-Waterloo, and I would not hesitate to bet that in any week, every couple of days, the subject of our relationship with First Nations comes up.

There is a hunger. People want to understand the issue. When they understand the issues and they realize the history—

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

Hon. David Zimmer: —they want to interact in a good way.

I think for all of us around this table and all of us in government, from whatever political party, we are at a moment in our history in the country, in the province, where we have the opportunity, if we get it right—and we are going to get it right—to tip this relationship in such a way that a lot of good is going to come out of it.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): About two minutes and 10 seconds.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Two minutes and 10 seconds: Thank you, Chair.

I know, Minister, you're coming to Sudbury. I believe it's around June 16, and we'll confirm the date. I believe that's the time you're looking at coming to Sudbury. I know this isn't your first visit. I know we've had you in Sudbury a couple of times.

One of the places I'm not sure you've been to yet is the Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre. Angela Recollet is the executive director there. They are doing fantastic work. I basically call Angela and that organization the Borg, in the sense that they keep buying buildings and expanding services for First Nations not only coming off of reserve, but for First Nation individuals who live in an urban setting.

One of the things they're doing in one of their rooms in their first building is creating medicines. Their elders are giving them the recipes, and they're creating medicines and they're sharing that. You're seeing a lot of the past ways for health care from these First Nations being brought forward. Hopefully, that's a place we'll be able to ensure that we visit when you come to town.

We've got maybe a minute or 30 seconds left, but on your tours, have you seen a lot of the health care facilities in any of these other First Nations? Are other First Nations starting to do work along those lines?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you. That is a good question, and it gives me an opportunity to talk about this issue. With respect to the centre that you're referring to in Sudbury, the aboriginal health access centre, that's a very, very successful centre.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: It is.

Hon. David Zimmer: Of course, you've been through it, and you know what it can do. There are 10 aboriginal health access centres in the province—

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'm afraid your time is up, Minister.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I want to begin by following up on the questions I was asking with regard to the Ring of Fire Infrastructure Development Corp. board of directors and whether you had achieved your goal of First Nations participation on that board of directors. I have a list of who is on the board of directors:

—Ehren Cory, executive director for Infrastructure Ontario;

—Rob Dowler, assistant deputy minister for economic environment justice and intergovernmental policy in the Cabinet Office;

—Linda McAusland, assistant deputy minister and chief administrative officer for the Ministry of Transportation; and

—Doug Carr, ADM of negotiations and reconciliation for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

I have to assume, then, that you failed in your goal of getting First Nations participation on that board of directors.

I'd like to go to your mandate letter, again with the Ring of Fire, where it states:

“Collaborating on Ring of Fire Negotiations

“Working with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and with First Nation communities on the next phase of negotiations under the Ring of Fire framework agreement our government signed earlier this year.”

I'll come back to the question I was asking the last time we had a chance to talk, and that was about how there seems to be at least some of the First Nations that aren't very happy with the progress in the Ring of Fire negotiations, specifically the Chief of Neskantaga, Peter Moonias, who, in an article from March 24, 2015, is quoted as saying, “‘What will it take to fix it? It will take chiefs to stand up and say that's it,’ Moonias said. ‘Because the government is going to continuously do that to us, to not allow us to do our own process in our community.’”

My question, which I had posed before, was this: Have you been to Neskantaga and met with Chief Moonias? Because, certainly from this article, it sounds like he's not happy with the way negotiations are going.

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes, I have been to Neskantaga. I've talked about how we plan for these tours, how they're conducted, and the extensiveness, the frankness of the discussions and the fullness of the discussions. I know that issue well.

There is a new chief in Neskantaga, not the one you have referenced. It's Wayne Moonias.

The direct answer to your question is that under the regional framework agreement, which was signed by the First Nations in the Matawa Tribal Council, issues about their participation, if you will, in the Hydro One—those discussions will be raised and dealt with at that table in conjunction with their respective outside representatives, if you will.

Former Premier Bob Rae represents the Matawa Tribal Council, and former Supreme Court of Canada

Justice Frank Iacobucci represents Ontario. The answer to your question will eventually come from discussions at that framework table with the Matawa Tribal Council. I have the names of the parties to that agreement here. But there is a new chief at Neskantaga.

We as a ministry and as a government, of course, work closely with our representative, Frank Iacobucci, who in turn works closely with Bob Rae, the Matawa council's representative.

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Mr. Norm Miller: So have you met with the new chief, then, of Neskantaga?

Hon. David Zimmer: I've not met with the new chief—that is, I haven't met with him. The last time I went up there, it was the former chief. The new chief—yes, I have met him here in Toronto at Leaders in the Legislature.

Mr. Norm Miller: Okay. I'd like to switch to legislation that was just passed today: cap-and-trade. With the government's upcoming cap-and-trade scheme, has your ministry done any analysis of what the plan will mean for aboriginal communities?

Hon. David Zimmer: Well, as you and everybody in this room know, the cap-and-trade piece was announced very, very recently—just the other day. I can tell you that there have been discussions, prior to that being released, with Regional Chief Day and others. Those discussions are under way.

Mr. Norm Miller: Assuming, Minister, that all remote communities will not be off diesel generation by January 2017, have you looked at what the additional cost will be for electricity generation in these remote communities?

Hon. David Zimmer: For the numbers on that question, I would refer you to the Ministry of Energy.

Mr. Norm Miller: It has been reported quite openly that it's going to be 4.7 cents a litre more for diesel fuel. In 2011, the federal government released a report that showed Ontario remote communities purchased 20,186,525 litres of diesel fuel. That number was reported in 2007, so it's likely that there has been an increase since then. Do you have any information on what the consumption levels of diesel are for remote First Nations communities today?

Hon. David Zimmer: That specific detailed information would be in the purview of the Ministry of Energy, but, having said that, let me just tell you further to your question that I was recently in Thunder Bay. We announced a \$13-million investment to support First Nations communities in their fight and adaptation to climate change, and to specifically support the development of microgrids and energy storage options.

With the help of \$5 million from the Green Investment Fund, First Nations communities, Laurentian University's very famous Ontario Centre for Climate Impacts and Adaptation Resources, and their partners, that's going to enable them to develop an adaptation plan for First Nations communities to prepare for climate change. It's going to help them to build technical capacity in

order for the First Nations communities to take advantage of economic opportunities from Ontario's proposed cap-and-trade program and, importantly, it's going to help to develop a northern Ontario climate change impact study using data from those adaptation plans.

I just want to say, at a personal level, I have travelled, and I know you travel, in the Far North—I don't know if you've been up recently to the remotes—but that's where you really see the effect of climate change and you see the reality of climate change.

I'll just tell one example. As you know, in the remote communities, for generations and generations and generations, every winter there's an ice road that is put in. That's how the heavy stuff, the big stuff that a remote First Nation needs, is shipped in—over an ice road. For those of you who haven't seen an ice road, it's packed-down snow through the bush, frozen lakes and frozen rivers. You can get to the First Nation in vehicles.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm familiar with ice roads and I think I know the point you're going to make. But with the additional costs of transporting goods and supplies to remote communities, because of cap-and-trade, is there going to be any compensation for that from the government?

Hon. David Zimmer: That's a matter that I would invite you to take up with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

I do want to finish my point about the ice roads because it's dramatic. Those roads used to be in existence for, depending on the community, three or four months. I am told now when I go up there that typically they can count on, in some cases, a mere six or seven weeks. So they've had to rethink and restructure the whole planning of getting the heavy stuff up there. It's expensive and it's difficult, but you see climate change there. Where once you could count on frozen ice for three or four months, now you can count on it for six or seven weeks that would support vehicles. That's where you see climate change.

I would argue that, of all the communities, of all the peoples that have to deal with climate change, the impact, in many ways, is most dramatic and most visible with our First Nations communities. Hence we really need to put our shoulder to the wheel with them on this issue.

Mr. Norm Miller: So in the short term we're going to deal with the additional four-cents-a-litre cost of the cap-and-trade tax.

Hon. David Zimmer: Well, you said that was reported.

Mr. Norm Miller: Pretty reliably reported, I think.

Hon. David Zimmer: Where? The Toronto Sun?

Mr. Norm Miller: They used some 20 million litres of diesel fuel a year, from 2007 numbers, so is there going to be any assistance for these communities with this additional cost?

Hon. David Zimmer: The federal government has a role to play in this issue because they have the primary responsibility for on-reserve issues. You might want to ask them their thoughts on this question. In terms of the

specific numbers and so forth, I direct you to the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

Mr. Norm Miller: According to the information in the Globe and Mail this week on the climate change initiative and the cap-and-trade plans, the article claims the government will spend \$91 million to connect First Nations communities to the grid. My question is: Has the government spent any of the money to date for this purpose, or are you waiting for these new cap-and-trade revenues to come in first?

Hon. David Zimmer: I would make two points in answer to your question. First of all, this is a matter for the Ministry of Energy. I suggest you direct your questions to him.

The second point that I would make, and I feel very strongly about it, is that I just do not comment on leaks to the media. The information that you've just provided me, presenting it as a factual piece, is a leaked document about discussions on an issue.

Mr. Norm Miller: Well, it was quite detailed and it did say "cabinet" on it—

Hon. David Zimmer: It was a leak.

Mr. Norm Miller: I guess my question would be: Which minister leaked it? Was it the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change who leaked it? It did have the Premier's signature on the document, as well, so I would think it has some credibility, and seems to have been widely reported.

So you have no idea about whether there is actually money to help First Nations—this \$91 million that's being talked about—to connect the remote First Nation communities to the grid.

Hon. David Zimmer: That document was a leak of discussions. I am sure that if somebody leaked to me about all of the discussions you have with your wife and I took those leaks as factual matters, you would be wondering what the hell is going on here.

Mr. Norm Miller: I guess that document—

The Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I am afraid that's it. We are adjourned until Tuesday, May 31 at 9 a.m., at which time the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will be here. We'll reconvene with this minister after we've finished with that ministry. Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 1800.

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