



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE**

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**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL  
AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE**

Ms. Laura Ross, Chair  
Regina Rochdale

Mr. Doyle Vermette, Deputy Chair  
Cumberland

Ms. Lori Carr  
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Ms. Lisa Lambert  
Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood

Mr. David Marit  
Wood River

Mr. Warren Michelson  
Moose Jaw North

Mr. Warren Steinley  
Regina Walsh Acres

[The committee met at 15:00.]

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. The time now being 3 o'clock in the afternoon, we will start the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice meeting June 20th, 2016.

Today we have attending myself, Laura Ross, as Chair. We have Lori Carr, Lisa Lambert, Warren Michelson, Warren Steinley, and substituting in for Doyle Vermette we have Warren McCall. And Dave Marit will be joining us shortly.

I would like to table Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice 1-28: Ministry of Government Relations response to questions raised in the April 27th, 2015 meeting of the committee, dated June 15th, 2016.

This afternoon we will be considering Bill No. 25, *The Wakamow Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2016*.

**Bill No. 25 — *The Wakamow Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2016***

**Clause 1**

**The Chair:** — We will now begin considerations of clause 1, short title. Mr. Docherty is here with his officials. Minister, please introduce yourself and your officials when you make your opening comments. And I'd like to remember officials to introduce themselves the first time they come to the microphone.

Any questions from the committee? Mr. McCall.

Oh, sorry. I was just moving along. If the minister would like to have some opening comments. I do apologize.

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Thank you, Madam Chair. I do have some opening comments and I will go through them. But let me begin by introducing the officials with me today for Bill 25, *The Wakamow Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2016*.

With me I've got Amanda Plummer, my chief of staff; I've got Lin Gallagher, deputy minister Parks, Culture and Sport; I've got Twyla MacDougall, assistant deputy minister of the parks division; I've got Nancy Cherney, assistant deputy minister; Lisa Dale-Burnett, park planner for the parks division; Bob McEachern, executive director of the parks division.

Before I go over the amendment to the Act specifically, I did want to give some context on this year's budget. Budget 2016-17 was designed to keep Saskatchewan strong. It is a budget that has no tax increases. It controls spending, it invests in people, and it invests in infrastructure. In terms of controlling spending, as you know, we did cut funding to some urban parks. But in terms of investing in infrastructure and people, the 2016-17 budget provides \$406.3 million of direct provincial support to municipalities. It is within that context that I will now speak directly to *The Wakamow Valley Authority Amendment Act*. We are recommending that *The Wakamow Valley Authority Act* be amended at this time to address one item, which is the elimination of statutory annual provincial

funding to the Wakamow Valley Authority.

In the past, urban parks have been jointly funded by government, the cities, and rural municipalities, and in some instances the universities. The eliminated provincial statutory funding is \$127,000. The amendment does not affect the \$190,500 which is required of the city of Moose Jaw, or the RM [rural municipality] of Moose Jaw for \$1,500 through this Act.

Ministry officials and I have held an initial meeting with the authority. Additional meetings with the authority and the city will be needed to make sure we understand and recognize their interests on the provincial land within the park and to discuss the best model of governance. We will work to establish appropriate mechanisms to make sure the public interest is maintained. Our discussions will include looking at opportunities to strengthen the ability of the cities to manage these parks well into the future. The cities do a great job of protecting and conserving urban parkland for both environmental purposes and for recreational purposes.

The government's municipal revenue-sharing program distributes funding to municipalities who in turn make decisions about local funding priorities. Since 2007-08 the Government of Saskatchewan has provided record grants, an increase of more than 100 per cent to municipalities through municipal revenue sharing. Moose Jaw has increased from \$2.8 million in 2007-08 to \$6 million in 2016-17, which is an increase of 157 per cent.

After multiple years of providing increased grants which are tied to the PST [provincial sales tax], the government is now asking those communities to take financial responsibility for their urban parks. We believe those municipalities are in the best position to make decisions about and take responsibility for their urban parks. We look forward to working with them through this transition and are happy to answer any questions they might have about governance going forward. With that, we can answer questions you may have on this legislation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much, Minister, for your opening comments. Now I'm going to ask for questions from the committee members. Mr. McCall.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Mr. Minister, officials, good to join with you again for the consideration of Bill No. 25.

I guess, by way of context, could the minister describe to the committee how this particular agenda item arose? Was there any sort of advance consultation with the authority in question? How was this decided as a means to proceed, and what sort of consultation with the authority was undertaken up to and including the meeting that the minister has just identified?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Yes, thanks for the question. As you know, budget decisions are confidential. During budget finalization, decisions are made and held in confidence until budget day. And as you know, this is a budget that controls spending; however it is also a budget that invests in infrastructure and people. We had to balance those, and I believe we've done so with increased municipal revenue

sharing.

**Mr. McCall:** — So put another way, the minister is identifying precisely no advance consultation with the Wakamow Valley Authority on this legislation or on the budgetary move. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — The proper budgetary process was followed when we informed stakeholders of the budget decisions that were announced.

**Mr. McCall:** — If the minister cares to expand on how that was conducted for the Wakamow Valley Authority, I'd welcome it.

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Okay, thanks. We do understand this is a difficult budget year, and there were very difficult decisions that were made. And we believe municipalities are in the best position to make decisions regarding their local funding priorities, and there has been record funding to municipalities. We feel they're well situated to address their local priorities.

**Mr. McCall:** — So the minister said that he would further expand on how the decision was communicated to the Wakamow Valley Authority. Could you please do that?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Thanks for the question. Wakamow Valley Authority found out on budget day as soon as the budget was announced, and ministry officials and I held an initial meeting with the authority. And additional meetings with the authority and the city will be needed to make sure we understand and recognize their interests on the provincial land within the park and to discuss the best model of governance.

**Mr. McCall:** — Well I guess that certainly presupposes a number of other questions that are to come. Does the minister have familiarity with the holdings of the Wakamow Valley Authority overall? What amount of acreage is involved, and how does that . . . What sort of different types of land constitute the holdings of the authority?

**Ms. MacDougall:** — Good afternoon. I'm Twyla MacDougall, and I'll answer that question. It's a little bit of a technical nature here. In total there's about 890 hectares of land that Wakamow oversees. There's a variety and different . . . variety of land, both types as well as a variety of owners. The city owns approximately 40 per cent of that land, of which some of it's parkland. Some of it's residential land. There's also streets, roads, and some services available in that 40 per cent.

The province has about a 24 per cent ownership, and that includes highways. There's also some institutional land. You're probably familiar that Valley View, the hospital, and Providence Place retirement home all reside within Wakamow. And there's some flood-prone land along the river held by Government Relations.

And then there's about 21 per cent, over 20 per cent is privately owned land with residential homes on it and some small commercial businesses. And then 14 per cent is industry, which includes rail yards, oil and gas storage areas. There's a landscape and gravel company.

And then the RM and Wakamow Valley Authority, they own

about half a per cent.

**Mr. McCall:** — In past, what sort of fiscal arrangements have there been around the provincial component of the valley authority? Were any of these lands ever subject to grants in lieu of taxes or different . . . The fiscal arrangements that were there between the provincial government and municipalities and entities such as the authority in past, can you give us a bit of an idea of how that's worked?

[15:15]

**Ms. MacDougall:** — Thank you. I guess first off, as you'd be aware, our ministry has over the past several years, since 1981, offered funding to Wakamow on average of about \$150,000 annually. It's gone up over the last few years slightly. In addition, the only other piece of agreement that I am aware of is a letter of authorization between Government Relations and the authority, and it's to manage the core area where the campground is. I can read you some of the specifics about that. The letter of authorization does get into the parcels and lots and blocks and what their consent is. Would you like that for the record?

**Mr. McCall:** — Yes, please.

**Ms. MacDougall:** — Okay.

This is further to the interest expressed to us by Mr. Jody Hauta, Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Moose Jaw, in transferring maintenance and operation of Crown owned land to the Wakamow Valley Authority.

As the representative of Her Majesty the Queen (Saskatchewan) for:

Parcel PR1 and PR2, Plan 87MJ17148;  
Parcel A, plan 101101925; and  
Lot 2, Block 12 and Lot 15, Block 6 Plan CX33.

[And then] I hereby consent to the authority exercising the power under section 11(g)(i) of *The Wakamow Valley Authority Act* with respect to these properties.

And I could read you that section as well.

**Mr. McCall:** — The reference is fine, and thank you for that. I guess one of the questions . . . And again the minister's identified this in the work that will be ongoing with the folks remaining at the authority in terms of who's responsible for what, who takes care of the land and what sort of . . . There's always sort of a quid pro quo that goes on in these things, where the authority's taking care of the land but the title is still vested in the Crown.

And certainly a very hot topic for consideration, I'm sure, will be the 24 per cent of the 890 hectares that sits with the province in terms of who owns it, be it Crown or otherwise. What happens with that land going forward? Is it subsequently removed from the holdings of what constitutes the authority? How does that, the whole question of who provides maintenance, who provides upkeep, how does that get addressed?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Thanks for the question. I'll reiterate. So ministry officials, we said earlier that we had that initial meeting with the authority. And additional meetings with the authority and the city, they will be needed to make sure we understand and recognize their interest on the provincial land within the park, and to discuss the best model of governance. And we have a vested interest as well obviously, but I guess additional meetings in order to come to that conclusion because there is some maintenance of the land in terms of grass, snow . . . [inaudible] . . . There's an awful lot of things, but we're going to . . . We'll work through all those things together.

**Mr. McCall:** — So even in the outset of his remarks today, the minister referenced the increase in revenue sharing. Is it the position of the government that the withdrawal of funding is one action that need not reciprocate then, the authority sending the province a bill in terms of maintenance or upkeep or any of those sort of ongoing questions that will arise? Or does the minister, does the minister assert that increased revenue sharing should address all of those concerns and that if the remaining lands have any sort of bill attached to them that the provincial government will not be paying those, that it will be asserting that revenue sharing is adequate and take it out of those funds or increase taxes in Moose Jaw? Or what's the position there, Mr. Minister, for ongoing liability?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Thanks. Well in light of the fact that there's been record revenue sharing and Moose Jaw has increased in funding in terms of municipal revenue sharing from \$2.8 million in 2007-08 to \$7.2 million in '16-17, we still believe that municipalities are in a better position to absorb funding given record grant increases, as I said, more than 100 per cent since 2007 and '08.

But knowing that, we're still going to conduct additional meetings with the authority and the city. Those are going to be needed to make sure we understand and recognize not only their interests in provincial land within the park but to discuss the best model of governance. So we're going to continue to have those conversations. There isn't a belief that municipalities should be or the valley authority should be clearing snow in provincial land without at least a conversation and an agreement.

**Mr. McCall:** — Is the minister precluding any financial arrangement or financial recognition of services that would be provided by the authority going forward? Or again is that all to be made up out of the revenue-sharing side of the equation?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Yes, it's too early to make that decision. We're going to go back and meet with our partners and stakeholders, and we'll go from there.

**Mr. McCall:** — Does the minister have any estimates of what that financial obligation would be on the part of the provincial government, again considering that 24 per cent of the holdings of the authority are invested with the province and the Crown, 24 per cent of those 890 hectares and whatever sort of financial liabilities might be attached there. Can the minister provide that analysis to the committee?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Thanks. No, the outcome isn't . . . It's not predetermined, so we're going to continue to have the

conversations. And without those conversations, we can't come up with a dollar figure because we need to sit down.

**Mr. McCall:** — Does the minister have any idea of what the assessed value of the provincial parcel of land might be inside the valley authority, if that was, you know, residential or commercial land, if it wasn't encumbered as such?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Just a clarification, so the 24 per cent provincial land specifically?

**Mr. McCall:** — Yes.

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Okay. Thank you. No, we don't have an assessed value.

**Mr. McCall:** — Now the minister, certainly you know the confidentiality of cabinet discussion and cabinet information, that's a well-regarded principle. But usually when a decision of this magnitude is taken, there's a fairly significant amount of analysis that goes into what the threats are, what the risks are, alongside the gain. And I guess, can the minister . . . Was there a risk analysis done in terms of you may gain the \$127,000 coming back into the provincial coffers on the one hand in terms of the statutory payment, but on the other side of the equation, was there any risk analysis done in terms of what liabilities the province might be undertaking with this move?

[15:30]

**Ms. MacDougall:** — I'll try and answer that question for you. We did look at all of the variables as far as what they currently offer. That core leased land that I was talking about earlier actually has a campground on it, and the lease is for a very minimal amount, so they are making revenue off of that and will continue to make revenue off of that. In addition we will still be talking with them and ensuring that they have the resources they need to continue operation of the urban park in conjunction with the city and what the city's expectations are as well of the park.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you for that. In the Act, it talks about, under existing 56(1), and then, you know, what the participating parties shall pay to the authority. And then section (2) states that "The participating parties shall review the amounts mentioned in subsection (1) a minimum of every five years after April 1, 1997." Can the minister or officials identify for the committee the last year in which the shares from the party were identified or discussed by the parties?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Thanks. The last review was in 2012.

**Mr. McCall:** — In terms of this particular policy option being seized upon, was this part of the ministry's budget submission to treasury board in the fall of 2015?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — The short answer to your question is no. But difficult budget decisions had to be made, so in finalization difficult decisions were made.

**Mr. McCall:** — Did the proposal for this policy option, did it originate with the ministry or did it originate with the cabinet come cabinet budget finalization?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — There was a lot of discussion around the budget process and, as we've said earlier, this was a difficult budget and so a difficult choice was made.

**Mr. McCall:** — Again though, I've asked if there was some kind of risk analysis done in terms of the policy option chosen. The minister has said there isn't. Usually that's part and parcel of submissions going from the ministry into cabinet. Minister, is that in fact what happened? There was no risk analysis done?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — A review was done in 2014, and I will let Deputy Minister Gallagher expand on that for you.

**Ms. Gallagher:** — Thank you. So as part of our work to be ensuring that we're most effectively and efficiently delivering our programs as government, we identify program reviews on an ongoing basis. And as the minister mentioned, in 2014 we did a review of the urban parks. So you know, your question around where this generated from, we had been discussing the best model for urban parks and we felt . . . as part of the review, you know, we looked at mandate and mission. We looked at the ongoing concerns about funding and how to appropriately manage that within . . . both with our partners that we manage the different authorities with. And so the whole gamut was looked at as part of the review.

And so coming out of the review, we had several recommendations that we were considering. So you know, there would be recommendations about, is this the right ministry that this is housed in? Should we look at different kinds of funding models? So we had looked at the whole gamut and had made internally some recommendations that we wanted to do some further work around funding, and we looked at the opportunities to meet with officials. So your request about, was there a risk analysis, we had looked at all of those. And when we moved forward as part of the final budget deliberations, we brought forward our recommendations from the program review back to government when the final decisions were being made.

**Mr. McCall:** — In terms of that review again, which got under way in 2014, can the minister or officials identify who was the minister at that time?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Thanks. I would have been the minister at the time, between . . . Yes, I would have been the minister.

[15:45]

**Ms. Gallagher:** — No, the program review documents are internal reviews that aren't published. This one wasn't brought forward as a specific recommendation until later in the process, so we wouldn't have shared that information. Lots of different material is discussed and until such time that it becomes a formal proposal by government, it isn't shared publicly.

**Mr. McCall:** — Is there any problem with sharing that document with the committee?

**Ms. Gallagher:** — So the material was never prepared for public distribution, so we would have to go back and determine whether the material would be appropriate for sharing. There would be third-party information and some confidential information that would have been gleaned as part of that.

**Mr. McCall:** — Well if the deputy minister could certainly undertake to do that, would be appreciative of that. In terms of having the look at urban parks, did this just . . . Was the focus on the five, or did it also include Meewasin and Wascana Centre Authority? Or was this limited to the five, or just some variation thereof?

**Ms. Gallagher:** — Thank you for the question. So just to clarify, so generally the discussion was around the five, but we also looked at the other two urban parks as well. With Wascana and Meewasin, there were challenges with the review work that were under way and that we wanted to continue, so we provided status quo funding this year. And we will continue the review with both of those urban parks, and so we're in conversations now about that continuing review.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thanks for that. In terms of the option of completely halting provincial funding to the five parks that had their funding cut this budget, was that included as an item for consideration in the 2014 work?

**Ms. Gallagher:** — So certainly so that would have been one of the options that was listed as part of the conclusion of the program review.

**Mr. McCall:** — Again the program review that was started in 2014, when was that program review concluded? In the same year or when?

**Ms. Gallagher:** — So program reviews, we have an ongoing list of when we're going through. I mentioned, you know, it's an important part of the work that we do, and so we report back out at the end of the fiscal year on our program reviews.

**Mr. McCall:** — So the end of fiscal 2014 is when this . . .

**Ms. Gallagher:** — March 2015.

**Mr. McCall:** — 2015 is when it was reported out. So withdrawing the funding to the urban parks was under consideration back then.

**Ms. Gallagher:** — So that would be fair to say that it was one of the options but wouldn't have been the option that we would have moved forward on. It was not part of our final budget deliberation as we were preparing for 2015-16. I mean sorry, '16-17. Sorry.

**Mr. McCall:** — I guess one of the things that folks are still trying to navigate their way through is that this comes out of left field, as it were, comes as a shock for a lot of folks, comes as a bit of a blindside. And comes on the heels of an election when, certainly, the government had a few things to say and one of them was that they were going to keep Saskatchewan strong. There wasn't anything said about, we're going to keep Saskatchewan strong and we're going to eliminate the funding for five urban parks, and we're also going to put the . . . we're going to sharpen the review of Wascana Centre and Meewasin Valley Authority.

So again, I'm just trying to figure out where this comes from. But am I understanding that correctly, that the first time this came under active consideration by the ministry was in 2014

and at the end of that fiscal year in March 2015? Am I understanding that correctly?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Thank you. During the election campaign, we focused on keeping Saskatchewan strong and we campaigned on fiscal responsibility and we've done just that. We made decisions in this budget to not increase taxes. We made decisions to invest in infrastructure and people. And this budget, the 2016-17 budget, does control spending, but we believe with the increase in municipal revenue sharing, cities are in the best position to make good decisions for the citizens around their urban parks.

And as I said before, this was a tough decision. These are tough and complex decisions. So this one was made and we're going on. We're going forward.

**Mr. McCall:** — Well does the minister care to hazard a guess as to what this does in terms of increased pressure to the property tax base in Moose Jaw?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Yes, I think that's a question that might be better posed to the city of Moose Jaw.

**Mr. McCall:** — All right. In terms of the review of parks and how they're funded, certainly there's involvement by municipalities with the regional parks. Given that this is sort of a pattern now with the government, should the regional parks be looking out for how their funding is going to be impacted in terms of the decisions of the provincial government?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Yes, thanks. Regional parks received the status quo budget this year. And it's of note that regional parks receive just capital funding. They don't receive any operational funding from the province.

**Mr. McCall:** — So is that . . . Is the minister suggesting that is some kind of a holdout reflecting back on the Wakamow Valley Authority question, that somehow capital funding will be held out as a possibility for future financial involvement by the province? Or is that just limited to the regional parks?

**Ms. Gallagher:** — So thank you. Just a response to that question is that the ministry does provide one-time capital money to many different entities as well as we provide some capital funding through some of our third party entities through the money that comes through the lottery trust funding as well as the community initiatives funding. So at this point in time I couldn't rule out that there wouldn't be one-time capital funding or capital funding for any of these urban parks in the future.

**Mr. McCall:** — And of course that will be part of the ongoing discussions with the folks at the Wakamow Valley Authority. Is that correct?

**Ms. Gallagher:** — Yes, that would be correct.

**Mr. McCall:** — In terms of the governance structure, the provincial government, as again stated by the minister at the outset, this is primarily a move on the funding that had been provided by the provincial government to the Wakamow Valley Authority. There are no sort of changes contained in this

legislation around governance. Can the minister or officials talk about the governance picture for the Wakamow Valley Authority and the province's ongoing involvement in that governance equation?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — So as I've said, the ministry officials and myself, we've met with . . . We had the initial meeting with the authority. And additional, as I said, additional meetings with the authority and the city will be needed to make sure we understand and recognize their interests on the provincial land and within the park. But they're in the best, you know, this is the best opportunity we're going to have to talk about governance together.

**Mr. McCall:** — Okay. Can the minister recap for the committee, or for the record, how many folks are on the board and who appoints them?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Thanks. Nine total. So three are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council; four are appointed by the city; and two are, two members, one each, is appointed pursuant to each rural municipality. And I'm just trying to think. Okay, so each municipality would appoint one, and it's just the RM of Moose Jaw now so three, Lieutenant Governor; four, city; one, the RM.

[16:00]

**Mr. McCall:** — For a total of . . . And I'm sorry. It could be the fillings in my ear picking up CHAB or it could be the drilling in the dome. I'm not sure what it might be, but if you could . . .

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — A total of eight.

**Mr. McCall:** — So again the province appoints three of the total eight members of the board, and of course now the . . . You know, when this bill is completed and when this budget is concluded, they appoint three of the eight board positions and contribute zero of the operating dollars. The minister's nodding his head but that doesn't usually cut it for the record. Is that the case?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — There are three government appointees on the board.

**Mr. McCall:** — And zero of the funding?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Yes.

**Mr. McCall:** — So what's the next plan for the legislative agenda as it relates to *The Wakamow Valley Authority Act*?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Yes, we'll look at, obviously we're going to look at the legislation and as we look at the governance and at the same time if further changes are needed . . .

**Mr. McCall:** — Further changes are needed. So if the province is closing the door on funding, isn't it a bit strange that they would retain the ability to appoint three out of the eight members of that board? Any thoughts on that from the minister?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — If changes are needed then, you know,

we're going to look directly at that because we've withdrawn funding and we've got appointees. We'll have those conversations.

**Mr. McCall:** — In terms of again ongoing liabilities that attach to the . . . And I'm not talking about maintenance of the different parcels of land or, you know, in terms of the 24 per cent of the 890 hectares that the province has title to. How do questions of liability get distributed through the Wakamow Valley Authority, and what is the province's involvement in those questions?

**Ms. MacDougall:** — Right now as it stands, liability is held by the authority but we will, through our discussions, also work our way through that.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thanks for that. What's the picture in terms of liabilities at present with the entity? Any sort of outstanding debts or obligations, or say a kid, you know, falls off the monkey bars tomorrow, how does that, you know, how does paying for that insurance go? All those sorts of questions of liability broadly construed that would go with an entity such as the Wakamow Valley Authority.

**Ms. MacDougall:** — I guess the answer would be similar. Nothing has changed. They continue as an entity, so therefore they would be liable.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thanks for that. In terms of the legislative consideration with the authority, are you considering moving it into some kind of private member bill status or private bill status or . . . I guess, you know, once that provincial government involvement ceases in terms of the funding, it raises a great number of questions throughout the rest of the piece of legislation. Is there any consideration of devolving this entirely to some kind of future constituted Wakamow Valley Authority? Because the legislation is quite prescriptive when it comes to things like the requirements for when different payments are going to be made by different of the entities that are partners in the authority, how those are going to be paid out, let alone any number of these other questions.

So I appreciate that it's budget time, and you've come to take out the statutory funding requirement from the Act. But it certainly begs a lot of unfinished business as regards the rest of the legislation and a go-forward where the province presumably will not be providing any funding. So are there any . . . I guess to broaden the question, what does the legislative agenda look like going forward? Is there unfinished business that cries out for redress in the next round of legislation? Any thoughts from the minister or officials on that score?

**Ms. Gallagher:** — So I think just going back to the earlier response is that, as we continue to go through these discussions with Wakamow, we would look at the legislation and if any changes would be required to accommodate the governance that we discuss that their preference is going forward. Of course, all of the partners would need to be engaged in that discussion including the city, the authority, and the RM that is involved.

**Mr. McCall:** — I thank the official for that response. And with that said, thank the minister and officials for joining us here for consideration of Bill 25. That concludes my questions and I turn

it over to the Chair to do her thing.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. We will now move into . . . Thank you very much for your questions.

We'll move into clause 1, short title. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.]

#### Clause 8

**The Chair:** — Clause 8, coming into force, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

**An Hon. Member:** — On division.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. So the member has asked that it is agreed to on division. That's clause 8.

[Clause 8 agreed to on division.]

**The Chair:** — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Wakamow Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2016*. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**An Hon. Member:** — On division.

**The Chair:** — Carried, on division. I would ask a member to move that we report Bill No. 25, *The Wakamow Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2016* without amendment. Ms. Carr moves. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**An Hon. Member:** — On division.

**The Chair:** — On division. Carried.

Thank you very much. Minister, do you have any final comments?

**Hon. Mr. Docherty:** — Thanks, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the member for his questions and I'd like to thank the committee for their awesome attendance. I have never seen . . . There's a lot of Warrens here. This is good. You can never have too many Warrens. But I'd like to thank all the officials. I'd like to thank the committee and the Chair and everyone else that helped today. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much, everyone, for attending. Seeing that we have completed our business this afternoon, this



committee stands recessed until 7 p.m. this evening. The time is now 4:13 p.m.

[The committee recessed from 16:13 until 19:00.]

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. And the time is now 7 o'clock p.m. and this is the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice. And tonight we will be considering the estimates and supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Government Relations.

This evening we have with us Doyle Vermette, the Deputy Chair of the committee, Lori Carr and Dave Marit, Warren Michelson, Warren Steinley, and Glen Hart will be a substitution for Lisa Lambert. We also have attending, Nicole Rancourt.

**General Revenue Fund  
Government Relations  
Vote 30**

**Subvote (GR01)**

**The Chair:** — We will now begin the considerations for vote no. 30, Government Relations, central management and services, subvote (GR01).

Minister Reiter is here with his officials. Minister, please introduce your officials, make your opening remarks, and when your officials speak for the first time, if they would please introduce themselves for Hansard.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Madam Chair, I have with me to my right, deputy minister Al Hilton. To my left, assistant deputy minister Laurier Donais, and assistant deputy minister Keith Comstock. Behind me I have my chief of staff, Angela Currie; ministerial assistant, Shannon Andrews; and also from the ministry, James Froh, John Edwards, Jeff Markewich, Duane McKay, and Trisha Delormier-Hill. And I believe there's a few other officials joining us as well, and if they take part in the debate we'll introduce them at that time.

With that, Madam Chair, I would like to just briefly read some comments into the record, and then we'll entertain any questions. I'd like to begin by providing a few general comments on the ministry's 2016-17 budget. Then my officials and I will be happy to answer any questions.

Government Relations' 2016-17 budget reflects the government's ongoing commitment to growth and securing a better quality of life for Saskatchewan people. The expense budget is \$511.1 million, an increase of 37.8 million or 8 per cent over last year, and 244.1 full-time equivalents, no change from last year. This largely reflects an \$18.4 million increase for the new Building Canada Fund, which now totals 28.4 million; \$10 million in new funding for the Saskatoon north commuter bridge; a \$6.4 million increase for municipal revenue sharing which now totals 271.6 million; a \$3 million increase for the gas tax program which now totals 60.1 million; \$4.8 million for gaming agreements which now total 78.8 million, offset by decreases to programs that reflect estimated funding requirements based on prior years' actuals or the sunset of infrastructure programs that are close to completion.

Another way to describe our budget is to break it down by examining the proportion of expense type. A total of 93.7 per cent of our budget reflects third party transfer payments. The majority, 78.1 per cent, is provided to municipalities, primarily through revenue sharing and infrastructure grants, while 15.6 per cent is provided to First Nation and Métis organizations, primarily through gaming agreements. 6.3 per cent of our ministry's total budget is required to deliver ministry programs. This includes community planning and support, our First Nations, Métis, and northern portfolios, emergency management and fire safety responsibilities, building standards, gas and electrical licensing, and the provincial disaster assistance program.

With that, Madam Chair, we'd be happy to entertain any questions.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much, Minister. Any questions on these estimates? Mr. Doyle. Vermette, sorry. I was very close.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Oh, you were close. Again, thank you to the minister, your officials, for being here, to give us an opportunity to ask some questions and maybe get some clarification on some of the issues that are outstanding. And I say outstanding because I'm going to go into the area with trapping.

I go back from last year's estimates and some of your comments, and I just want to see how you guys have moved on the files. And you had individuals, and I'm hoping you can give us some updates on some of the good work you said you guys were doing, your ministry was doing. I believe Jim Andrews was the one that was appointed for your ministry. There was Mike — is it Gollop or something like that? — for the Ministry of Environment; he was working with the trappers.

There's about 14 areas we had talked about. You shared with me that you guys were ongoing, having discussions, and you felt pretty positive that you guys were going to be working ahead on that. So if you could give me an update on the working that you've done and the dollars that you have, and out of this budget coming forward, what new dollars would be going to working with our trappers to make sure the issues and the interests that they have raised have come forward and how you're dealing with that. I'm just curious to see how things are going. It's been a year, so I imagine you've got some good progress.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Thank you for the question. We have been doing a great deal of work with the trappers there and in just a minute I'm going to ask Richard Turkheim from the ministry to give you sort of a more detailed answer, but I want to make some broad comments first if I could.

Our folks in Government Relations, led by Richard, have made a lot and frequent contact with trappers in the North. They've done a lot of work to . . . They've been in regular contact with them to sort of identify and discuss their industry concerns and their interests. Richard, as I've said, is going to go through some of the breakdown but I would also mention that . . . You know what? I'll do that at the close. Richard, I'm going to get you to do a bit of a breakdown on the work we've been doing and then I'll wrap up.

**Mr. Turkheim:** — Thank you, Minister. My name is Richard Turkheim. I am executive director with the northern engagement branch of Government Relations and I'm based here in Regina.

Since estimates of 2014, we've been playing a role from the northern engagement branch supporting Environment and their relationship with trappers as well. From 2014 on, we committed one of our officers from La Ronge to be another point of contact for the northern trappers, and we began working with the then president and reviewed the key priorities from the annual general meetings of the trappers for the past number of years, etc., as well as some research that had been undertaken for them at the University of Saskatchewan, and from that research put together, as you referred to in your question, an outline of 15 priorities that seemed to have history and resonance with the trappers as being fundamental things that they wanted to pursue and try and advance on behalf of their members.

For the past two years, a senior policy officer in La Ronge who's been a northerner for 35 years or more has worked very closely with the trappers to help them advance their communications. We've invested in board training and capacity-building workshops with the trappers, some of which were just concluded on the days leading up to this most recent annual general meeting of the trappers, etc.

We have, just in terms of a last comment or so, we have documented the priorities for trappers in what we call a mission- and a project-evaluation framework that we developed over the past couple of years. And it's a very thorough way, we feel it's a very thorough way of setting forth for all of the trappers and the executives to see outlined, here's where our common priorities are; here are the ministries and the officers from Economy, Environment, Highways, etc., who are working with us and ready to work with the trappers as well to advance those priorities. So the framework's proven fairly effective and it gives us good goalposts to shoot for.

Last comment: as we look forward to work with the trappers in the months and the quarters ahead — and I've just gone over this with Jim Andrews in La Ronge — we're going to be proposing to the executive a more ambitious communications campaign on some outstanding matters in which the trappers are interested.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I would just add to Richard's comments that our ministry officials have, I believe, done a very good job in attempting to build communication and reaching out, and there's . . . They targeted 15 identified priorities that they've been working on, and I would just like to read through those quickly so you can kind of get a better feel for what they've been doing.

It talks about improved communications, which I mention on helping with organizational capacity, supporting and developing education programs, assessing long-term funding options for their annual convention, pursuing opportunities to add value to raw fur products, increasing the availability of firearm safety instructors and courses, increasing trappers' understanding of forest fire management practices, exploring options taught for firefighting courses for front-line community members,

exploring options for insurance coverage for cabins lost in forest fires.

Clarifying provincial policy on the use of Conibear traps versus leghold, clarifying the government's duty-to-consult process, reviewing the trappers' provincial policy on the size and numbers of cabins, again some more policy work that they're working on establishing trapper contract information, sort of helping to coordinate between other ministries like Environment and Highways, and doing some work as a non-for-profit co-operative. So there's a lot of different areas that our folks have been working on with them and you know, I envision that going forward to probably just continue and hopefully to even improve.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Okay. I guess to take it a little further and maybe you could, as you talk to, you can get these number and submit them later if you don't have them when I ask for those numbers today, what I'm going to ask for. Like, I look at the 14 . . . And I know there's 14. You talk about 15 and that's good; maybe there's one I don't know. Maybe it's the long-term funding they're looking for as an organization. But you talk about meetings going on and your officials doing that, and I'm hoping that that truly is what's going on. Like you know, I mean I have no reason not to . . . to doubt it but I know there's still frustration with many trappers about duty to consult and accommodate and when industry is going on their traditional territory without them being consulted.

And I know there was discussions about making sure there was a contact, some time of thing when industry or Environment, Highways impacted traditional trappers. You talked about that, having that dialogue and communication and so that, as we know, the Crown has the obligation to consult and accommodate traditional land users, being it Métis, First Nations, non-Aboriginal. If they are northern or they're a trapper, they're supposed to have that dialogue going on, and there's still a frustration that that's not happening.

So I can say that yes, you may identify with them and I'll give credit that you identified these 14 areas or 15 as you're saying, and that's great. I'm just hoping and I'm going to go back because from what I'm getting, I don't know how much individual work on those issues. And I know Jim has probably been doing meetings with them and that, and don't get me wrong; that's great. But at the end of the day there has to be some more progress and it has to move in a meaningful way.

And I'm talking about dollars. So maybe at the end of the day, you guys can show us, the committee, you can submit what dollars went to these 14 issues that have been raised that you have had this ministry officials working, senior staff working with the trappers. Because there's frustration when I think about their long-term commitment of funding. And I know your ministry can work and advocate with the other ministries. And you say you're doing that, and I hope in a meaningful way that that is happening, because there is a lot of frustration out there that the trappers are not getting the support they need, and maybe they're getting 50 per cent of it, like, you know, of things happening.

[19:15]

I'm going to follow up when I'm done. I've met with many of them, and I go to most of the trappers' meetings. And the frustration's always there. You know, Environment's there; they do their part. But when I think about your ministry in itself, and I just think about that, advocating for our northern trappers which, you know, you identified you want your officials to do that. And it is frustrating. But sometimes maybe the communication . . . You're committing to doing that, but I don't know how we ensure that that's happening. As a minister, maybe you and your officials can have a way of targeting that to make sure it is happening. It's not just talked about on a piece of paper and said, we want to achieve this. It's a good idea. We've had a good dialogue. But how do we ensure at the end of the day that, yes, we've achieved something and we accomplished that?

So I don't know if you wanted to . . . I'll come back on it, but if you want to . . . if there's some areas where maybe some of your officials know that I'm wrong, you can correct me. Maybe I'm wrong and there are dollars that have been committed; there is a commitment and some things that you have done, and I'm just not aware of it, that they haven't shared it with me. But I will be going back to them immediately to find out what, you know, in light of what you've shared with me, how much your officials have been meeting with them, because I'm curious to see.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I'll just make a few comments. I'm going to ask Al to elaborate on a couple of specific areas, on the wildfires and the duty to consult. But just broadly before he does that I would say, you know, it's been my direction to our officials to make that a priority. It's my understanding that they have been, you know, having communications with them fairly regularly.

But I would also suggest to you that if there's instances where specifically there's something that, you know, with a constituent you have, if there's something we can be helpful — and you know, you've approached me in the past on other issues on behalf of your constituents — I'd certainly be pleased to do that again. If there's, you know, particular people that there's something we can help with or provide information to or do something with, please feel free to contact me. We'd be happy to do that. So I'll ask Al to speak to those two points now, if you would.

**Mr. Hilton:** — Sure. Al Hilton, deputy minister of Government Relations and deputy minister of First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs. There's sort of two broad themes that have resonated with me over the past year with respect to trappers. One of them relates to duty to consult, and the other one relates to the lessons learned from the wildfire experience.

And we conducted I think eight meetings in the North, what I called community engagement meetings, to hear from northerners on their experience around the northern wildfires that covered the gambit of issues associated with the wildfire event. And one of the things that was uniquely commented on by trappers and the people generally that live off the land in a traditional way, was a cumulative impact of all the forest fires and the impact that that has on their trapping, their ability to trap, their traplines, as well as a general just environmental concern around the cumulative impacts.

So that lesson learned, that reflection has been captured in, you know, the government's go-forward plan in terms of the other — and I'll make up a number, but I'll be reasonably close — 150 lessons learned through that unprecedented experience. So that, you know, that really resonated with all of the ministries involved in those community engagement meetings, of which I attended all of them except for one. And the deputy minister of Environment was also involved in that and a number of other officials from across various ministries. So I would make that observation.

With respect to the duty to consult, we assess the impact that any particular development activity might have on Aboriginal rights to hunt, fish, and gather, and based on that assessment, we send out notices. Our obligation is to send those notices out to, you know, First Nations or Métis organizations as opposed to industry associations such as the trappers. So the trappers have an opportunity to express their voice through First Nations governments or through Métis organizations. That's with respect to our legal duty.

Now setting aside the legal duty, the duty to consult framework that the government has approved, that we operate within, also emphasizes the importance of engagement when we don't necessarily have a legal duty to do. And we encourage government ministries and officials to engage beyond just our legal duty, which can include a conversation with the northern trappers. So we're engaged in conversations at multiple levels. Sometimes it's with the trappers association and sometimes it's with the First Nations themselves, of which the trappers are a member.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Thanks for that, Al. I would also like to point out, Richard just reminded me of something that our officials had did that had helped the trappers association with, and that was help them with the process of re-establishing as a not-for-profit, and with the hope then that it will potentially open other avenues of funding from NGOs [non-governmental organization] and from other bodies as well. So that's I think just one example of a success where we've been helpful to the association.

I'm also going to get Richard to walk through . . . you know, some of the issues they've been working on, they've completed already, but there's a number that are ongoing and they're going to be continuing to do work on. I'm going to get Richard just to list those and kind of give a brief explanation of each one of those.

**Mr. Turkheim:** — Thank you, Minister. There are five areas that Jim Andrews . . . we want to focus on working with the trappers moving forward. Forest fire management practices, that's one area of considerable interest to the trappers, obviously, and our ministry certainly had a significant role there together with Environment in analysing improved practices in that regard.

We also are looking to explore options for insurance coverages for trappers' cabins lost in forest fires. I don't know what the answer to that will be, but that is another area that we understand is of significant interest to the trappers themselves. Al has already spoken to the duty to consult process, and I'll leave it at that. But we want to also work with the trappers and

review with them provincial policy on the forestry buffer zones around trappers' cabins, another matter that has always been of concern to trappers.

I would say . . . You had mentioned exploration concerns of trappers, and that's certainly understood. It's an area where we continue to try and develop ideas and new approaches to further increase trappers' understanding of the exploration sector, etc., and the approaches and the timelines involved, even to the extent of perhaps looking at the environmental quality committee perhaps in a future role upon renewal, if it's renewed, to perhaps help to support trappers in that regard with additional information.

I'll end on a note of the long-term funding interests that trappers have had. This year I will admit I struggled when the trappers were organizing their convention. It was right in the week or a couple of weeks before a writ was dropped for the election. And we and Economy and Environment, three ministries that I'm aware of that were approached for funding, we struggled to respond because it would have put us in contravention of the restrictions around the writ period. So perhaps a level of support this year from three very interested and concerned ministries perhaps wasn't what the trappers were expecting, but there was limiting circumstances here.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Well, thank you for the information. I would go back to this, and this is not something that's new. The trappers have asked for core funding. They've put in proposals that have been rejected. Year after year we've had a government that has had record revenue. There was such an opportunity to work with our trappers. If you really wanted to reach out and work with them in a meaningful way, that's all they're trying to do. They're trying to work with government, with industry. They're trying to co-operate for everyone.

So I think about . . . and you know, you can say it's the . . . the problem they didn't get money this year is because of the writ dropping. That's fine. I can accept that. You have to follow the rules, and that's fair. But having said that, they're asking and they've put a proposal several times, and I know they've been rejected or I don't know where it's at.

And sometimes I watch them and I listen to them in the meetings. And these are traditional people, live off the land. And I think about the president now watching this gentleman, and he's raising his grandkids, his children in the traditional ways and living off the land. And the man is sincere. He will take anybody out there and he will try to teach. He's doesn't criticize but he wants to make sure the water's protected, the land's protected, the game, the culture, the language. There's so much that he would like to protect. And I know in his heart he will continue to work hard, being it government, industry, whoever would reach out and work with him. They want to work together.

So when I say that, I'm hoping that your officials and yourself as the Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs, First Nations, and Métis — and a lot of them are that are living traditional lifestyles in the North — that you would see it to say, you know what, I'm going to make this a priority. We can make this happen somehow in a meaningful way, a dialogue, sit down . . .

And I'm going to encourage them to, as you said to me, if you know there's individuals that you'd be willing to help out, I'm going to contact him tonight and I'm going to tell him to set up a meeting to come and meet with you and your officials. And not just your officials. I think it's important for him to meet with yourself as a minister to hear, you know, what they're trying to do and what they're proposing and seeing if they can get your support to see where they're coming, that they're not trying to fight industry. They'll work with industry. They're not trying to fight any government agency. They're trying to work together. But they need some help to keep their minutes, their resolutions, the different things they're going . . .

They've had a lot of help from PAGC [Prince Albert Grand Council] but I think the PAGC has done its part too, and I think they're trying to let the trappers move as association, whether it's an office, a staff, get some things going. So if there's ways to support them in the industry, you know . . . Is it going to be perfect? Maybe not, but at least the willingness to try to reach out with them, and I think that's what they're asking for.

And you would have a group that as far as I'm concerned, you know, as a minister and your officials, when you have the duty to consult and accommodate which has triggered the document that you're referring to, they would have the contacts on who's out there on the land and where they're at and who'd be impacted, that they would be able to work with you.

And I've talked to them about that. Like I see such good things that they want to do. They want to work with government, with industry. They're not against it, but I think they're getting frustrated. You know, it's their traditional territory, their land. They want to protect the way of life I talked about, the water. And they're genuine people. That's all they're asking for; they're not asking for everything. They're asking for a little bit of help to get set up and not always cut and the different reasons why. So I'm hoping . . . And I will encourage them to get a hold of your office to meet with you, and whatever I can do, I would work with them to get that done. I think it's important.

You know, you talk about some of the other areas you're working on, and I'm curious to see . . . Maybe you can provide me with what positive meetings you've had. Like what have you guys, of these 14 things, what have you guys resolved, issues? You said there's five that you're feeling pretty confident with. I would like . . . I don't know how we make sure that's happened, other than me going back and asking them, or if, you know, if you have something or a document or something in writing that says you guys have accomplished that, then that's great. If you could provide that to the committee, that would be great. Then we know for sure.

But I guess I'll see. That's a question to you, is will you work on core funding with them? You know, would you consider that? I'll leave it at that.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Thank you for the question. I'm going to . . . You had several questions in there. The point about what they've worked on and what's complete, I'm going get Richard to run through those items, you know, sort of where there's been success, where issues have been completed, and things that they're still working on.

[19:30]

To your question about meeting with them, I'd be happy to have my officials and myself meet with the trappers association. So if they'd like to, they can certainly request and we'll arrange that. I would, just before I ask Richard to go through . . . And I hope you didn't mean it in that way, but I took a few of your comments frankly to . . . I guess I took a bit of offence to some of your comments. Because I think although it might have been inadvertent — I hope it was — but I think it demeans some of the work that our officials have done. They've been certainly trying to be supportive and helpful to the trappers association. They're going to continue to do that. And I think some good work has been done that you'll see, that Richard will go through now.

**Mr. Turkheim:** — Thank you, Minister. And I'm just going to go through those 14 or 15 items because I'd asked for an update about a week and a half ago as to why are we judging certain things to be complete and why do we regard there being good progress in other areas.

So for example, in terms of improved communications, we've met three times with the board in the past calendar year, and Jim Andrews, my employee, our employee in La Ronge attends bi-weekly phone calls with either Robin McLeod or Adam O. Charles. And we have had a number — I can't remember the exact number — of in-office update meetings with both Adam O. and Greg Charles, especially leading up to the annual general meeting of a couple of months ago.

In terms of strengthening the organizational capacity of the NSTA [Northern Saskatchewan Trappers Association], that's still an ongoing area of interest on our part. And I would hasten to add that our branch, through Jim Andrews, tries to provide an administrative support role, tries to act as a bit of a small secretariat to assist the trappers. With regard to strengthening the organizational capacity of the STA [Saskatchewan Trappers Association], that's ongoing, and we're assisting the NSTA to source funding, have sourced funding from the office of the provincial interlocutor, another element of the Ministry of Government Relations, and that was for the board governance training.

We've also made connections with the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, Kyle White at the University of Saskatchewan, and we're happy to see the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives coming on strong and playing a stronger support role for the NSTA, as well in helping them to undertake their further work in developing as a non-profit corporation.

There's ongoing discussion with regard to developing educational programs for trappers in the industry. Environment certainly continues to support the education component for training young trappers about government regulations that apply, about firearm safety, and about humane trapping practices.

What we're trying to do with the trappers is to work on their idea, and PAGC is very interested in this as well, in an outdoor survival component along with structured practical experience in trapping. So that is an area where we hope to have further discussions with the trappers to try and advance that whole

concept into at least a pilot if not a working model.

In terms of opportunities to add value to raw fur products, that's another area that's ongoing in terms of interest, etc. We've got a lot of work to do in that area. We know that the fur table, I think it's two or three years now that the fur table has proven to certainly be of interest if not effective in terms of assisting trappers with the sale of furs, tied around the annual general meeting. Jim and I have talked about how we can try to parlay that, working with Economy colleagues to try and further assist the industry in that regard. And I want to be respectful of the time here. Like I've only addressed five . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Okay.

Another area is the overall trying to increase the availability of firearm safety instructors and courses. The NSTA obviously continues to encourage its membership to become actual firearm safety instructors themselves. And we fully support that obviously, as does Environment who's very interested in seeing that being successful and effective, because of course firearm safety training, that's mandatory for all new hunters and trappers over the age of 12.

In terms of forest fire management practices, I've sort of spoken to that generally before, and we have interest in sharing more information and trying to get that out to trappers through . . . We are looking at the idea of a "did you know" kind of PSA [public service announcement], if I could call it that, which we would seek to use more traditional means of trying to get that information out to trappers. And Environment supports that idea as well.

We call complete — hopefully it's complete — an exploration of options to offer firefighting courses for front-line community members. And last I checked with Environment, they had actually increased the number of initial attack teams in northern Saskatchewan by eight additional attack teams for the 2016 wildfire season. So hopefully that addresses that particular area of interest that trappers had in seeing communities more able to respond, both adults as well as perhaps more mature youth.

I've touched on before the fact that we've still got work to do in trying to help the trappers explore for the possibility — don't know whether it's there or not — but the possibility of insurance coverages for trappers' cabins. I can understand that, that it's an important asset.

In terms of item no. 10, if I could, we have certainly worked with Environment, supported Environment to clarify provincial policy on the use of Conibear traps versus the modified leghold traps. I remember the last AGM [annual general meeting] I was at — it wasn't at this one in the spring but it was the year before — I know a number of the trappers, because I talked with them, they were . . . I think some were confused, or maybe I am. But modified leghold certainly is permitted as far as I understand, but some trappers thought no, they had to completely go away from leghold and switch to Conibear. I think we've played a role there to try and assist in that more accurate understanding of what the requirements are.

We have had discussions and try to provide information and reviewed with the trappers what the policy is, provincial policy on the size and the number of trappers' cabins that are permitted

on existing TRU, or traditional resource use leases. We have work to do, as I mentioned earlier, we have work to do in terms of reviewing with trappers provincial policy on what the forestry buffer requirements are around cabins.

And second-last, I'd say that we have established . . . trappers always seem to be always very concerned about who has the right to take beaver off the road allowance, etc., to trap beaver. And that was a bit of a bone of contention, feeling some fellows perhaps weren't taking beaver out of the area they should. So we've worked with Environment. Environment really led the work there to establish clear contact information, both for Environment and the Ministry of Highways folks, so next time they have a nuisance beaver, they know the right person to call to take care of that particular animal.

And last, as I mentioned a few minutes back, we're really pleased to be able to help, coach, or work with the NSTA and sort of advise them through the process of reaching out to become established as a not-for-profit organization. And there again, a lot of the credit goes to Kyle White and others from the University of Saskatchewan in that regard.

That's sort of our involvement with the trappers' file over the last little while.

**Mr. Vermette:** — And I'll clear up to the ministry, you said you had some concerns of the way I, maybe I was coming across with my wording about the work that your officials have done.

As the gentleman sitting beside you said, there's more work to do, as he said. I know that, and I want to assure you as a minister, there is more work to do for the trappers. You can identify things, and that's great. But follow-up needs to happen, and I think that's important. So you know, I'll go back to that, saying yes, some areas your officials might have done a great job, and I thank them for that. But there's areas where there's a lot of work that still needs to be done. We know that. So I'm hoping that will happen with the initial meeting.

And for the record, I'm glad that your officials, for the record are saying the things that they've worked with the trappers and what they've accomplished because that gives you some concrete to go back and say, well here's what . . . My understanding is that you've worked with the ministry and their officials, and you guys accomplished these things. So if they're happy with that, then we can put those four or five items away and we don't have to worry about them. They're off the list, and that's fine. Start working on the other ones, if they're comfortable with that.

And having said that, like I said before, it's an issue that the trappers take very serious, their traditional way of life, getting access to their traditional life, people coming in without consulting. And I've heard so many meetings about individuals frustrated that somebody goes into their area, whether from industry or whatever it is, and does something, changes their trapline, that affects their way of life.

They're not against industry. They're not against working with people. They've said that in many meetings I've been in. They're willing to work, but they want to feel . . . and need to

have their voice heard, and saying there might be a way that you can do what that company wants to do, but maybe a different way that they've suggested. They can go around a way. Like there's different things that they can accommodate and work together, and I've always heard them say they're willing to do that. So I leave it with that. There's definitely more work to do. I'm hoping that the positive meetings that they will have with you and your officials will, you know, resolve some of the issues — long, long, ongoing issues that need to be addressed in a meaningful way.

And I say, I hope they reach out to you. I will suggest that, and if there's anything I can do to help out, I will do that with them, taking you up on your offer. And we'll follow through, I hope, so next year I can come back in here and actually have very positive things to say, that, man, you guys have committed to doing this and you've got a lot of work done, that you did do that.

And I'm hoping that that's what will happen, because for too long that's an industry . . . They're frustrated, and when I see them getting frustrated . . . You know, they see industry taking, taking, and that's fine. They see government . . . And they understand that process. But they just want to make sure they're heard, that they have input, and that whatever their suggestions and their issues are taken serious. And I hope that will happen and continue to happen.

And again — I'm just about done here, what I wanted to do — I promised them that I would bring this up as far as the trappers and their issues. We'll continue to work with them and if more questions come up, we'll deal with them. But for now, you know, I have no further questions in my area, so I'm going to move out of the way for my colleagues to ask some questions.

But again I'm hoping you will get the follow-up invitation to sit down with them, and we continue to work in a positive way because, if not, at some point they're going to get frustrated, and I think they're going to say enough's enough. So let's hope it's a positive way. So thank you for your time, to the minister and your officials, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** — Ms. Rancourt, are you asking questions now? Mr. Belanger?

**Mr. Belanger:** — Yes, thank you very much. I'm going to assume the opportunity to ask a few questions as it relates to First Nations and Métis spending by the provincial government.

The first thing I was going to ask is, it was with a great desire of . . . discomfort and anger and shock that we heard of the increase in unemployment by the First Nations and Métis people throughout the province. But it was further complicated by the fact that the closure of the Buffalo Narrows Correctional Centre — which saw, I think it was 26, 27 Aboriginal people; I think the vast majority were Aboriginal, First Nations, and Métis people — were shut down so coldly and callously. It was the phrase I used in the media and social media as well.

What kind of influence and what kind of directive do you assume or would you undertake to protect the amount of people working that are of First Nations or Métis ancestry when it comes to the overall role of governments to ensure that they try

and keep as many First Nations and Métis people employed as possible? Do you have an overarching authority to instruct departments to minimize or at least share the job loss that we saw with the First Nations and Métis people as a result of the closure of the Buffalo Narrows Correctional Centre?

[19:45]

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — First of all to the high rate of Aboriginal unemployment, it's far higher than any of us would like to see, but it's not a new phenomena. As you know, you were a senior cabinet minister in the previous government, and at that time the Aboriginal unemployment rate was also extremely high.

You know, to your point about how we coordinate myself with other ministers or between different ministries, all my colleagues, all our officials are very mindful of that. We're extremely concerned with that. We saw progress being made over a period of years that Aboriginal unemployment was coming down. Recent increases trouble me greatly. I would point out, as you're aware though, those increases aren't exclusive to First Nations. Those increases are right across the piece, unemployment in the province. And I think it speaks more to economic conditions that we're currently experiencing.

We've taken an approach with Aboriginal unemployment that education's extremely important. As you're aware, we've made great strides in adult basic education. We've also put record amounts of funding into, for example, SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies] because we find that that institution, we believe, has been very successful, has a very good track record. So there's a number of things that certainly we're working on; we're going to continue to work on. And while we're extremely concerned as you are about the high rate of unemployment, we're going to continue make that a priority.

**Mr. Belanger:** — I would restate the question of you. Do you have any overarching authority to ensure that, as the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis people, that if there are cuts to programs or cuts to employees of the Saskatchewan government that are Aboriginal ancestry, no minister has to report to you to release employees of First Nations or Métis ancestry. Is that correct, yes or no?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I would explain it to you this way. I'm Vice-Chair, treasury board. So when significant decisions of a financial matter are arrived at, I'm certainly well versed in them and have a role to play.

**Mr. Belanger:** — When you heard of the decision to end the operation of the Buffalo Narrows Correctional Centre, did you argue the points that this was an area of your responsibility, being northern Saskatchewan? It had a direct negative impact on the First Nations and Métis people of whose interest you are to protect as a minister of the Crown. And did you feel that this was an unnecessary and certainly unprovoked attack on the employment opportunity of a region that desperately needs employment?

The problem we have here is that Buffalo Narrows losing 27 jobs is akin to Saskatoon losing 2000 jobs. It has the same effect. It really dramatically took the legs out from under the community, and people were very, very shocked and angered.

Those are the two initial reactions. They're shocked and angered. And some of them, like myself, were disgusted with that particular decision to close down the Buffalo Narrows Correctional Centre. There was absolutely no reason to do that.

Now as the minister responsible for protection of Indian and Métis Affairs and also Northern Affairs itself, I guess what kind of argument, what kind of defence, what kind of decisions did you undertake to try and reverse that ill-conceived notion or ill-conceived idea, or did you defend those positions at all?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — You were a member of cabinet for a long period of time. You are well aware that I can't and wouldn't disclose discussions in cabinet. But I will certainly say this: no member of cabinet took that decision lightly. You've heard that from the minister in charge of Corrections on several occasions when you raised it in question period. It was an operational decision on how best to deliver those services in a most efficient manner as possible. And again those decisions are not taken lightly. And you've asked this question on several occasions in question period, and that's good. That's your prerogative. But I'm not going to disclose discussions that were held at cabinet, as you well know.

**Mr. Belanger:** — The issue really wasn't if I was in cabinet or not or a former member of a former government or not. That's not the issue here. That's totally irrelevant subject. The point is . . . and I'm going to assume you didn't defend the interest of these First Nations and Métis employees of the Government of Saskatchewan when one minister arbitrarily made a decision to put them out of work. So when you say, I'm not going to disclose that confidential information, my assumption is you didn't defend that. You simply accepted that. So my point being is that how . . . I guess the question I'm asking is, how effective is your role as a defender or, if you will, an advocate for the First Nations and Métis people of our province, how strong and how influential is your role as a minister to defend those interests?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I take great pride in the role that I play. And I think I'm very effective in defending those interests. The point I was making previously was not whether or not you were in cabinet or not. I was making the point that you were asking me to disclose conversations in cabinet. And you, as a former minister, know full well how inappropriate that is, so that's the point I was making.

Now you can play politics, as you often do. You come in, in Estimates. Or you come in, in committee. You waltz in, and you try to light a few fires and make some political grandstanding points like you often do in the House. That's your prerogative. You can do that, but if you're going to question the role that I play, don't expect me not to defend myself. Do I defend the interests of the North and First Nations and Métis people? Absolutely I do. I take my job very seriously. So if you have a reasonable question, I'd like to hear it.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Well I don't think defending 28 jobs is grandstanding. I really don't think that's grandstanding at all. And I was making reference to your earlier comment that you said that there were decisions around unemployment of which you're a minister in those days and things haven't gotten better. So to a certain extent, the argument I would make is that well

that opens up that particular door, if you want to talk about the history, and certainly I am prepared to do that.

But there's a lot of angry people out there. There's a lot of angry people, and they're wondering why, in a region of which you are minister of and in an area that has high unemployment, of an area that has 80 if not 85 per cent of Aboriginal people living in it, in an area where, like I said before, jobs are scarce . . . The magnitude of that particular cut was devastating to these families and that community.

Now if you charge me with grandstanding, defending those interests, well I'm sorry you feel that way, but I don't share your views. I'm simply expressing to you and your government that that decision was very callous. It is very cold. I think it was calculating as well. The net effect is you have 28 people now looking for work in a community that desperately needs that work. Now if to you, if that's grandstanding, well that's grandstanding. To me that's quite frankly giving the voice of the people that are angry about it, the people that are angry about it.

You know we have families here that were paying a mortgage with those jobs. So I'm sitting here, and I have now 28 constituents unemployed; court workers unemployed. It's a decision that the government took right across the board to make those cuts, and I'm merely suggesting to you and asking you, how much defence did you afford these families? And this is a very uncomfortable topic for yourself and for me, but we got to know, that if there's going to be cuts in the future, that we have to have somebody in cabinet defending organizations or a certain group of people in a certain region. And if we can't get that for you and we're accused of grandstanding, well I guess I'm guilty of that.

But there are 28 people now looking for work in Buffalo Narrows, an area and a community that can ill afford those job losses. It is a devastating hit to the community. So my point to you is that, how strong of a defence can you tell us you took to defend some of the positions that were lost at the Buffalo Narrows Correctional Centre?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I would repeat what I said to you earlier. Not one of my colleagues took that decision lightly. We realize the impact that that's going to have on a number of people. It was an operational decision that was made by officials determining the most effective way to deliver their mandate. As far as specifics to the actual closure and the mechanics of it, I think my colleague, the minister in charge of Corrections, I think has been in estimates already. I believe she has. Were you there? Did you ask some questions?

**Mr. Belanger:** — The bottom line is the minister made the decision and she ain't changing her mind. Now what I'm going to ask you is, how much defence did you afford this 90 per cent First Nations and Métis staff out of Buffalo Narrows? You would probably have a more effective role within cabinet to defend these individuals than I would in estimates asking questions. We asked questions of the minister in the Assembly. We had visitors come to the Assembly. We had various letters coming to the government from various organizations that were in support of that centre. Now I have to ask the question: who defended the unemployed First Nations and Métis people who,

as of July 31st, are wondering what they did wrong? And did anybody defend them within government? And I'm assuming that as the First Nations and Métis Relations minister, that you would have that role. And all I'm merely asking you is how strong of a defence did you afford these 28 unemployed workers at the end of July.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — You can continue to ask the same question over and over. You're going to get the same answer over and over. Myself and all my colleagues, nobody took that decision lightly. It was a difficult budget. It's difficult economic times right now, and some tough decisions had to be made. I guess I would refer to something you said earlier where you weren't happy with the answer I gave you or felt I didn't answer it so you assumed things. So I'm assuming because you completely avoided answering whether or not you asked the Minister of Correction any of these questions in estimates, I'm assuming you didn't or that you didn't bother to show up.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Well I would think that this is where I would ask the questions and you would give me the answers. Doesn't work the other way around. But no, I just wanted to make sure that on record I got your response as to the defence of those 28 employees. And I certainly got my answer that I wanted. Unfortunate as it is, I've received my answer from you in many different ways.

I want to now shift my argument to the gaming agreements, in particular the Saskatchewan . . . or the Clarence Campeau Development Fund. I've received their latest annual report, and in that report they've identified, you know, the amount of money they have within the Clarence Campeau Development Fund. And I'm just wondering, could you give us a synopsis just based on the history and the trend of the Clarence Campeau Development Fund? Can you give us a breakdown of, say over the last four or five years, how much has the fund increased in terms of savings? Has the increase been pretty gradual? Has the increase been up and down? Like how would you characterize the increase in savings? You know how each year the Clarence Campeau Development Fund gets a certain amount from gaming. And what are the trend lines say for the last five years? Has the income been pretty consistent in terms of what they get on an annual basis or has it been up and down?

[20:00]

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I apologize. My officials tell me they don't have the numbers for the last five years but we'd be happy to get those and forward those to you.

**Mr. Belanger:** — And the reason why I'm asking this is, this is the situation that I see it. Like, Clarence Campeau Development Fund was established to assist Métis entrepreneurs. And obviously it's a pretty pivotal organization in ensuring that we do have a lot of entrepreneurs, Métis entrepreneurs that would seek support from the Clarence Campeau Development Fund. And I am just wondering, over the past several years how have the disbursements or how have the funds been released from the Clarence Campeau Development Fund? And I'll maybe give you a bit more of a clarifying statement.

Say for argument's sake the Clarence Campeau Development Fund gets \$1.5 million a year as their portion of the gaming



agreement. I don't know if that's the amount they get, but you can clarify that maybe on an annual basis.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — [Inaudible] . . . \$3.2 million for this year.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Okay, it's 3.2, it's 3.2 million. Now of that 3.2 million, how much of that . . . Is there any money earmarked within that 3.2 million of the agreement with the Métis Nation? I'm assuming that that's their parent company. Is there any requirement for the Clarence Campeau Development Fund to say, you have to disburse at least 60 per cent of that money each year? Is there any of those conditions attached to the Clarence Campeau Development Fund?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I don't think there is a requirement like that. I'm looking to my officials and they're thinking that . . . They don't believe there is as well, but I'll have them check and if it turns out there is something different, I'll follow up with you. But I don't believe that there is that sort of a requirement.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Now the other point I would raise is that . . . Your officials would know this. Has the annual savings of the Clarence Campeau Development Fund . . . You know, every year they have a net asset base. Is it fair to say that the Clarence Campeau Development Fund over the last number of years, say four or five or six years, actually their net value has been increasing? Like they have not been disbursing the funds as quickly as I think they should. Is it fair to say that the CCDF [Clarence Campeau Development Fund] fund has been increasing in value each and every year? Is that a correct assumption, yes or no?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — We're just checking the financial statements right now. So if I can just clarify, though. You several times used the term "savings," but what you're meaning at the end when you wrapped up I'm assuming is the amount that they're allocated, when they don't grant it all out, the amount that they're retaining. Is that what you're referring to?

**Mr. Belanger:** — Right.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Okay. Again going back previous years, we'll have to follow up. But for the last two years which we have here, their net assets increased from 2014 to just under \$28 million, to 2015 to 29.5. So I think that would speak to the issue you're raising. It looks like it increased by about 1.5 million, the net assets did.

**Mr. Belanger:** — And I guess, my point being, Mr. Minister, is that \$30 million is an impressive amount. It's gaming revenues, I appreciate that. But how long has the Clarence Campeau Development Fund been in existence?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Well my deputy minister, Al Hilton, has been here a really long time, and he tells me that it's been in existence for many, many years. So I don't have an exact year for you.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Yes. Well he doesn't look like he's been here that long. The point I would raise, Mr. Minister, I think it's 1998, and then they had in 2002, they had a revised . . . or a review of the program. But I guess the point I would raise, in the last 16, 17 years the Clarence Campeau Development Fund

now has achieved an impressive \$30 million in what I would consider savings.

Now I think it's important again, I think it's important that we review what exactly are we doing wrong. We're not maximizing those gaming revenues to stimulate the Métis economy in some of these northern communities. That is one of the things that I find on a consistent basis. People are asking these questions, where is the Clarence Campeau Development Fund on some of these projects? And I simply cannot answer that question.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — You know, from the government perspective in this, as you mentioned, under the gaming framework agreement, we arrange to have the money transferred to the organization, but as far as sort of specific money that flows under their programs, you know, as a government we don't micromanage that. Certainly we pay attention, you know, our officials were just telling me, to the audit report every year, to the management letter. We're not aware of any concerns that were raised by the auditors in either of those documents.

But if you . . . You know, certainly if you have some specific concerns about the way those programs are being managed, if you would like to share them with me either now or follow up, I'd be happy to have our officials deal with the organization and certainly do our best to get you answers to your concerns.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Tell me this then. Who has the final authority to appoint the board of directors of the Clarence Campeau Development Fund?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Okay. It's, as I understand, it's a seven-person board of directors — two ex officios appointed by the province, and five by the Métis Nation.

**Mr. Belanger:** — And who is the person responsible for making those five appointments? Because I've spoken to a few members of the executive and they say they have been largely removed from the process. As you and I know, the Métis Nation has been struggling as of late. Those struggles continue. We now have the courts intervening, deciding when they're going to have their Métis national legislative assembly, the MNLA.

So I'm assuming then, in the absence of a functioning organization and the dispute between the executive and the rest of the provincial Métis council, that somebody must be giving you names. And I would ask, is it a member of the executive? Is it the minister responsible for Métis economic development? Who exactly are you referring to when you say they put names forward? Can you give me the name of the individual, please?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — So I think the situation now . . . And you know, I'm well aware, as you pointed out, the governance issues that the Métis Nation has. It's our understanding . . . I don't know that there's been any changes to the board in quite some time. I think they've continued to pretty much operate as is while waiting to see how things sort out with the governance issues with the Métis Nation now. You know, if there's a specific concern you have with that, I'd be happy to hear it and see what we can do.

You know, the issues with the Métis Nation, you know, it's unfortunate. This went on far too long. I'm sure you'd agree with that, and I'm hoping that it'll be rectified soon.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Yes, I would say . . . The point I'm trying to get at is that if we have the same board of directors — I don't know how long the same board has been intact — and we have the same trend where year after year the fund value is increasing . . . I don't have a list of all the loans and applications that the CCDF have gone through, but I really, truly think it's time to do a review of just how much money is being lent out to the Métis community.

Now I had the opportunity to attend New North's meeting in Prince Albert last Thursday in which there was discussion around how you stimulate the northern and, more particularly, the Métis community. Statements were made there — I don't want to name the individual — saying that if a person wanted to borrow \$5,000 to buy an old, a used pickup truck to go and start a wood-hauling business, well my goodness, they have to go through, you know, 50 different forms. Now that's an exaggeration. I appreciate that.

[20:15]

But I would submit to you, Mr. Minister, the fact that we need to look at, if you will, what opportunity exists out there for the government to take a proactive, and a continual proactive position on some of the organizations that you have influence on, such as appointing the board of directors.

I can safely assume, and correct me if I'm wrong, but as these board appointments come up, I'm sure that they're for a term of maybe two or three or four years — I'm not certain — that given the turmoil at the Métis Nation itself, that maybe this became a habit to reappoint these same people over and over again. I don't know if that's the case. I'm hoping that it's not. So could you clarify that for me, please?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — You know, I think it's fair to say that, you know, as I mentioned earlier, the board is essentially just trying to keep operating in a normal process while those governance issues are sorted out. I think there's a certain amount of risk if we start interjecting ourselves in the day-to-day operations on how the board is managing. It's certainly going to make life easier for everyone once those governance issues are solved.

But I come back to a point I made earlier. If, you know, if there's some specific concerns . . . And I'm taking from what you said and I think that's like a valid concern, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I'm taking it from the comments you make about the amount of money on hand continually increasing, you're feeling that rather than that money being there it should be out in the field, so to speak, helping with economic development. If that's the case, I can certainly arrange to have that raised with their board. And again I don't want to put words in your mouth. I was assuming that's what you meant. Or if there's more to it or any other questions, I'd be happy to follow up with them.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Well I'm not certain how I would characterize the request because there's two trains of thoughts in my mind right now. Number one is that we've got to exhaust

every, absolutely, absolutely every option or avenue of support that the First Nations, and in this case the Métis people, could access, change things around in their community.

And when you look at the CCDF, and I would suggest to you, Mr. Minister, that their revenues have been increasing every single year. We're now at \$30 million sitting in this Clarence Campeau Development Fund, so my question is, are we utilizing the dollars to the extent we should be? If it's one tool that we are not utilizing to the full extent, then I'm asking, what are we doing wrong?

And the other avenue that I would suggest is that from the Métis Nation itself, while I'm imploring consultation and I'm actually imploring agreement, we can also anticipate that the Métis Nation themselves will continue to have these structural challenges. I don't suspect that the MNLA is going to solve the problems attached to the Métis Nation file. I really don't. I pray that it will, but unless and until there's a brand new election and that there's an effort to rebuild the whole organization immediately — and that'll be a task in itself — that we can anticipate further organizational challenges for the Métis Nation. It's not going to end in two, three months, that I can safely assume. So that being said, the only next natural partner that I would look to that could stimulate that activity that we want associated with the Clarence Campeau Development Fund are the people that appoint the board of directors. And that would be the provincial government. So I guess those are the two thoughts that are in my head right now.

And I would ask . . . The other question is are all the board of directors, is it a requirement that they all be Métis? And if that's a requirement, then how is the determination that they are of Métis ancestry? Is self-declaration one of the options in determining their eligibility? And how long was the original term of these board of directors in place for?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Yes. There were several questions in there. The last ones I'm going to ask officials to check while I'm answering earlier ones. You made reference to the province doing the appointments, but as I mentioned earlier, there's two ex officios that are appointed by the province. Five are appointed by the Métis Nation.

To your concerns about I guess the job, if you will, that the board of CCDF is doing, in 2014 there was an evaluation of the fund done by Meyers Norris Penny, and it goes through a number of different categories. It focuses on three: achievement of outcomes, efficiency and effectiveness, and market relevance. And I'm just going to read a few parts of that.

Under achievement of outcomes it says, "CCDF has demonstrated a consistent track record of delivering positive outcomes through the delivery of loan programs to Métis entrepreneurs."

Goals and objectives it says:

CCDF established effective strategic plans based on the needs and opportunities for Métis people, plus the realities of the marketplace.

CCDF effectively implemented planning and

accountability that links mandate and funding terms to a strategic plan through to effective governance and business operations.

CCDF is proactive and continues to seek out opportunities to better assist clients through regular internal program reviews and updates, the addition of the Métis Economic Development Sector and the continuation of the Métis Energy and Resource Program.

And then it goes on and gives some more information under benefits. It says, “CCDF’s traditional and new programs have allowed Métis businesses to begin, grow and remain in Saskatchewan. Many owners attribute their success to CCDF’s ongoing support in terms of financial and ongoing advice.”

That was from Meyers Norris Penny. So I guess, you know, your point raised about how the fund continues to build as opposed to, you know, being put out in their programs and helping more entrepreneurs, I think that’s a valid question. If you’d like me to, I’ll happily, you know, put that question to their board and attempt to get an answer on that. But you know, in a more broad way I guess, if you like, any of the concerns you have, any questions you have, we’ll certainly attempt to get answers for you from them.

But I would just reiterate to you that, you know, the gaming framework agreement is in place so we’re committed to providing that funding. But for me to interject myself in those day-to-day decisions about where their program money goes, I would suggest to you that if I did that, we’d be sitting here in committee and you would be taking me to task for interjecting myself into the day-to-day operations.

So now, sorry, to the other questions that you had. You had some questions about term of board appointments and also whether or not the board members had to be Métis. I’ll see if we have answers to that.

Okay, just to deviate just for a second because I think it kind of gets to the core concern that you have. Laurier just pointed out to me that according to their statement of cash flows for the year ended December 31, 2015 on loan payments advanced — which I’m assuming to mean sort of the loans they’re putting out the door — in 2014 it was 3.8 million, and in 2015 it was 4.4 million. So you know, there is a significant increase. Again we don’t have previous years to that, but I think that sort of speaks more to the concern you raised.

As far as the board members on there, I’m told that this all flows back to a 2002 agreement with the government, and that the five members that are on representing the Metis Nation are all Metis. As far as requirements, we’re going to have to have officials check that agreement. We don’t have it with us here. And if that’s okay with you, I’ll certainly follow up in writing with you on that.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Yes. You offered a couple of points tonight that you’d follow up with me, and I’d like to take you up on it. One of them of course is that information, and the previous information of looking into how the program is delivered.

There’s two or three things I would say on the Clarence

Campeau Development Fund: (a) you’re right that I wouldn’t want you to interject yourself on a day-to-day operation because I’d be here criticizing you for doing so, so I wouldn’t expect you to do that; (b) I would also point out that absolutely you want the organization to run on a professional basis. And this is to a large extent gaming money, therefore public money, so obviously we have to have standards of conduct that are appropriate and responsible and transparent. That’s also an underlying theme to my questions that I’m asking.

And the third point is yes, Meyers Norris Penny gives some very good professional audit advice. I’m not decrying that nor am I arguing about that point. I’m just saying to you as a minister that it’s really incumbent upon the people that appoint these board of directors to make sure that, on a continual basis, to oversee the fact that they are delivering what they’re supposed to deliver.

Now you give me the two figures of 3.8 or 4.4. Is there a standard of measurement that you would say that after you achieve \$30 million in profit that a certain percentage should go to new disbursements, or is any of that discussion happening?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Just two points first I need to reiterate again. You keep referencing to the government appointing the board members. Five board members are appointed by the Métis Nation, according to that 2002 agreement that was signed with the government. So it’s not the government appointing those, so I just, I want to clarify that.

To your point about, you know, sort of a threshold where it sits. I don’t . . . My understanding is, again if there would have been one, it would have been included in that 2002 agreement. I don’t believe there is. To set that sort of threshold, I would suggest to you that’s probably governance practices more than something dictated by the minister or by the provincial government. So that would be something the board should look at. I don’t know whether they are or not because again I don’t delve into day-to-day operations of the board. I can certainly follow up with them and ask if they’re, you know, can indicate to them that there’s concerns that perhaps that fund’s getting too large and they should ensure that fund’s flow. I’d like their point of view on that.

[20:30]

So you know, the short answer to your question about some sort of threshold is, I don’t know. I wouldn’t interject in that, but we can certainly check with the board if they’re looking at something like that.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Yes, and I would assume that that information is probably readily available in terms of a threshold amount because you’d do comparisons to, say for example, the SaskNative Economic Development Corporation, SNEDCO. I would assume you’d do comparisons to Aboriginal Business Canada, as they get grants from the federal government to do their work that there may be a threshold or percentage that they would suggest be achieved.

There is other Aboriginal programs in other jurisdictions across the country. Do they have any of those thresholds? This is very interesting stuff to me personally. Have we done a side-by-side

comparison? And the reason why I'm saying that is because if there is side-by-side comparisons and we show that the threshold is quite low for CCDF, it lends credence to my argument that perhaps we're putting too much money away or being too rigorous in our process to award Métis businesses some financial support to get them stimulated.

These are some of the things that we want to find out, and that's why it's important to point out that eligibility of the board, performance, all those issues are really important, all the while maintaining our current theme — don't interfere, make sure it's open and accountable, professional and transparent, all those good things. I'm not saying take those away. But let's keep vigilant on the point is that if they're not meeting the threshold of other points it would be interesting for us to know that fact. Again, not interfering, but if we find that that's the case, then it'll lend credence to my argument again that perhaps we're not being aggressive or vigorous enough to get that dollars into the Métis community to stimulate their economies, to create greater employment for them, which in turn builds and strengthens families throughout a lot of areas, including mine.

Now the other question I have on the actual board is . . . I'm a bit confused again. You say you appoint two ex officio members and the Métis Nation appoints five. I got that part. How often are these five reappointed and who reappoints them? Are they there for two or three years, and like do you deal with the president of the Métis Nation or the executive or do you deal with the minister for economic development from the Métis Nation?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — So to your point on the board appointments, again I'd refer to the . . . my officials tell me it's the 2002 agreement signed between the government and the Métis nation at that time. Those board members would have been appointed in accordance with that agreement.

In the meantime, with all the governance issues that the Metis nation has struggled with, I think the best way I could explain this is when the appointing body is somewhat in disarray, you know, it's difficult to know what to do in those instances. So I think as much as possible they've continued to operate in the same manner as they had been all along.

So to be more detailed than that, you're going to have to bear with me. We'll have to have officials check that agreement. And again, I had made some commitments to follow-up that I would do with CCDF. I'll also follow up with you in writing on the board appointment and the process under that 2002 agreement.

**Mr. Belanger:** — So again, I just wanted to point out . . . And I don't want to assume here, but correct me if I'm wrong. My final question — I'm going to have a little break here I think — my final question is, is it safe to say that 80 per cent of this board has been intact since the original agreement, or is that number higher or lower? Could you elaborate for me, and then I think the Chair wants to take a quick break.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — So you're . . . Just for clarity, you're asking what percentage of board members were on the original board — with the 2002 agreement, I assume — that still are on there? We don't know. Our officials don't know, but we'll

follow up with that as well.

**The Chair:** — The time is 8:39. We are going to take a five-minute break.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**The Chair:** — The time is now 8:50, and we will proceed.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Okay, thank you very much, Madam Chair. And I know there'll be other opportunities over the course of the next couple of years where you're going to be looking at the opportunities attached to the Clarence Campeau Development Fund. There's just a ton more questions we have, but for the sake of time here and the fact that I've been graciously given some time by my colleague, Ms. Rancourt, and some of the questions I have, the final few minutes that I want to share with the minister is really around the Daniels decision.

As the minister may know, this could have some most sincere, positive opportunities for the Métis of the province of Saskatchewan. There are now tons of people paying attention to what the ramifications might be and could be as a result of the Métis being deemed by the Supreme Court of Canada ruling that they should be viewed much the same as you would view First Nations or Indian peoples of Canada. So that decision will have a most profound effect on not just Saskatchewan but right across the country. So I've only got one question in relation to the Daniels decision, but I want to preface that question with a very short statement.

Mr. Minister, there's a lot of people paying a lot of close attention. There are some people that have this belief, and I share that belief, that this opportunity attached to the Daniels decision could have a most profound effect on the future governance right across the country and more so in Saskatchewan. So I want to assure you that there are a lot of people thinking this thing through, and a lot of bright people, myself excluded, but a lot of bright people are paying very close attention to this decision by the Supreme Court of Canada. So in saying that, I just want to basically assure you that there will be people coming to knock on your door as well because I think it has some great opportunity on many fronts.

So on that note, I just want to very briefly ask you: what is your government doing to prepare itself for what I think is going to be the next wave of opportunity for the Saskatchewan Métis people in concert with the First Nations? Are you doing any planning work or are you . . . Obviously you're researching the impacts of the Daniels decision. Are you negotiating anything with the federal government? Just how prepared or what kind of preparatory work are you going to be undertaking as the minister to position the Saskatchewan Métis as best you can as a result of this decision around Daniels?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Thank you for that question. You know, as you mentioned, this case will have huge implications. We've been watching it with some interest, and I think I would probably best put it this way. These are one of those significant issues that's cross-ministry. Clearly there's a significant impact on my ministry, on Justice as well. So our officials have been doing a great deal of work in that, as has Justice officials. I'm going to ask my deputy minister, Al, to speak to just kind of the

broad parameters, probably, of that case in just a minute.

But I would suggest to you, as I think you sort of alluded to, we're kind of in uncharted territory right now. So we have a great deal of work to do, I think, going forward. Federal government clearly has a huge role. You know that the Supreme Court decision, you know, it alluded to actions the federal government doesn't necessarily have to take, so we want to see what the response of the federal government will be. But clearly we are well aware of the potential significance of this decision. So I'll get Al to make some comments. He's been working more intimately with it.

**Mr. Hilton:** — Thank you, Minister. First I should say that I will exclude myself from the bright people category when I'm commenting on the Daniels decision. This is complicated material. It's reviewed by experts in constitutional law, and I don't claim to be an expert in constitutional law. But if I can perhaps put a bit of a layman's frame around the question, you know, the Supreme Court of Canada in the *Daniels Decision* held that both Métis and non-status Indians are Indians for the purposes of section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act of 1867*, confirming that the federal government has jurisdiction to enact laws and to establish special programs and services for these groups.

It is early days since the Daniels decision. The court accepted the argument that Métis are Indians for the purposes of that section of the constitution and therefore fall under federal jurisdiction. This means that the federal government can no longer deny requests by the Métis for special programs and services on the ground that Métis do not fall within federal jurisdiction. But it doesn't necessarily obligate the federal government to act on that obligation.

So it's early days. We'll have to have conversations, you know, with the federal government and see what the federal government is going to do in terms of their response to this decision. And the Ministry of Justice are really the ones that are doing the deep dive on the constitutional implications, so the Ministry of Justice is in a better position than I am to answer, you know, specific questions regarding the implications of this important legal decision.

But I would simply say that, you know, the Supreme Court has held that both Métis and non-status Indians are Indians for the purposes of section 91(24), and what that means is that the federal government can no longer deny their requests on the basis that they don't fall within federal jurisdiction.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. That's all the questions I have for this evening.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. Ms. Rancourt who is now substituting in for Mr. Vermette.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — First of all, I want to thank everyone for being here tonight on a beautiful June evening like we have tonight. You know, I'm sure everybody else would much prefer to be outside or be with family or be even just in comfy clothes and enjoying their evening, but thank you for taking the time to being here. So I'm new to this portfolio so this is a great opportunity for me to be able to learn a little bit more about the

budget and the programs related, and I look forward to learning more this evening. So thanks again for being here.

So some of my first questions are with regards to funding, and so there was some discussion of changing the mill rates for education taxes. Has there been any further discussion to changing those rates?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Generally, you know, every year it's up for review. Just a quick background on that. In 2009 changes were made for the provincial government to start setting the education property tax mill rate factor or, excuse me, mill rate. And so every year subsequent to that, there's a review done, essentially a review done, I guess, every year to decide where we need to fall with the mill rate. This year was no exception.

[21:00]

Since we made those changes in 2009, there's been . . . any changes . . . I have to watch how I word this because you can't say the mill rate didn't change because every four years there's a revaluation; the assessments change. So in those years, we've adjusted the mill rate accordingly for it to be revenue neutral. This year was not one of those years, and this year it was decided that, given the economic circumstances we're under, the economic conditions we're living with, it just was not the appropriate time for a tax increase, so the mill rates were left the same as last year.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — So now that we know there isn't sufficient funding through the provincial government grants for school boards, wouldn't it make sense to allow for the municipalities to have a greater control over the mill rates and allow for sufficient funding of education?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — That's not how it works. Municipalities don't set that. Municipalities have complete control over their mill rates. I think what you may have wanted to ask was whether school divisions would have authority in the mill rates. If that is the case, if was what the question intended to ask, that essentially would fly in the face of the decision that was made in 2009.

And I guess I would disagree kind of with the preface of your question to begin with. You know, you've been in the House every day. There's been questions asked of the Education minister on, you know, appropriate funding levels for school divisions. Funding for school divisions in this province over the last number of years has increased exponentially. And I realize that every budget year all stakeholders would prefer more money, but I'm of the firm belief that my colleague, the Minister of Education, is right, that what we're asking school divisions to do is reasonable and prudent in these tough economic times.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Well I think we'll agree to disagree on that, but I'll move on to some other funding issues here that I noticed within the budget.

I have a question about the transit assistance for people with disabilities, that program. I notice it hasn't changed for a while. Why hasn't there been any fluctuation with regards to disability in transit?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — So in answer to your question, to put things in context, there's a capital component to the grant; there's an operating component to the grant. In 2013-14 I'm going to compare it to, and the reason is because a change that was made on the capital side, but previous to us forming government the operating side of the grant was \$2.3 million. It's now just under 3 million, 2.987 million. In '13-14 the capital component of the budget . . . the previous year it had been 275,000. In '13-14 we doubled that to \$550,000. And at that time our ministry officials, if you will, canvassed municipalities to try to get a sense for the need and the demand. I'm going to ask assistant deputy minister Keith Comstock to explain to you what happened during that canvassing period.

**Mr. Comstock:** — Good evening. My name is Keith Comstock, assistant deputy minister of Government Relations. The transit assistance for people with disabilities program is one of the responsibilities of the municipal infrastructure and finance branch within my division. This program, as you probably are already aware, provides financial support to municipalities who offer paratransit services. Currently there are 79 communities in Saskatchewan that are taking advantage of this program. We recently heard that the town of Rosetown has indicated they are considering withdrawing from the program. We're not sure of the outcome of that yet so that number is subject to some change.

As the minister mentioned, in 2013 when we were increasing the capital funding to the program, we canvassed all of the municipalities in the province that were eligible to take part and invited communities to submit their names. And there was very few that were added to the program. I think it was less than five that we added to the program at that time.

So the program budget in '16-17 for this program is 3.537 million. That includes 2.987, so just under \$3 million for performance-based operating grants and then \$550,000 for capital grants. So the way the capital grants work is that we take submissions, applications from all of the participating municipalities, and then there's a rating system that we go through. It takes into account the age of the unit that's there, when was the last time the community was afforded the opportunity to get the subsidy for the buses, and it works out that we're able to provide about 10 or 11 capital grants each year of about \$50,000 that go towards helping purchase new vehicles or refurbished vehicles for use at the community level.

The \$2.987 million that goes in the performance-based operating grant is recalculated each year using trip numbers. So our staff keep track and work with the paratransit service providers in each of those 79 communities to keep track of all of the trips that they provide. And then with all of the money that we have, we divvy it up on a per-trip basis. As you might expect, the larger communities have a much larger drawdown. Obviously Regina and Saskatoon are major users of the service and that's just to be expected.

We're actually part of the committee that worked on the disability strategy with the Ministry of Social Services, and it's clear that this program is very valuable both to the communities in general that use it and of course to the users that are benefited through it. And we look forward to continuing our work with the Ministry of Social Services as they roll out the disability

strategy and making sure this program stays relevant and of use to the communities that are part of it.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Then I would just add I think to Keith's comments that the program I think is sort of doing what it's intended to. I think it's a significant help to municipalities and I think, which I believe would be of special interest to you — I'd stand to be corrected, but if memory serves — I think one of the more recent capital announcements we did was a new bus for Prince Albert.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Thank you. So I also noticed that the funding allocated for the municipal and northern relations has been going down. So what is the explanation for that?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Sorry. Can I just clarify which line item were you on?

**Ms. Rancourt:** — It was the municipal and northern relations one. So here I have that in 2015-16 it was 7.163 million and then in 2016-2017 it's 6.995 million.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Right, a decrease of 168,000.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Yes.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — That essentially, if you will, in the operations of the ministry, that 168,000 you're talking is part of the . . . well the way Keith referred to it is the admin money, right, kind of the operations part of that. So that reduction consisted of a number of different sort of subitems, if you would, underneath that line. So I'm just going to get Keith to walk through those with you because it's not one item; it's a component of a number of items.

**Mr. Comstock:** — So the way these budget numbers work out, if you've got the vote 30 number in front of you, there was a \$10,000 decrease to the ADM's [assistant deputy minister] office. That came out of monies that I have set aside to work on special projects and to assist in special projects that might happen at the community level.

There's a \$92,000 decrease to the community planning branch, and that comes out of the regional program. That was a number that we had used . . . It actually just reflects the actual use of that program, so that was a saving that we realized.

Northern municipal services went up 18,000. The municipal infrastructure and finance branch went down 58,000, and again that was a saving that we were able to realize through use of vacancy management and some of the codes that . . . so it was an opportunity for saving that in our codes 2 to 9, which is our admin money.

Advisory service and municipal relations went up 19 and then northern engagement went down 45, and again those were reflective of cost-cutting and saving opportunities that each one of those branches were able to afford because of the way we do business.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — And the regional planning authority also went down but quite substantially, so I was just wondering what was the difference there.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — That was, along with many of the expenditures Keith just went through, that's just merely to reflect actual funding requirements based on how much was actually spent over the last period of time.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — So you highlighted some of the infrastructure spending. Can you highlight overall how much of the funding for infrastructure is from the federal government?

[21:15]

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I'm going to get Keith to give you sort of a more detailed breakdown in a minute, but the vote 30 items you'd be looking at right now under the New Building Canada Fund, the 28.4 million you see, 7 million of it for this year would be federal share. Keith will explain to you why that is in a minute. And then if you go further down the line items, when you get to the gas tax program, the gas tax program is flow-through money from the federal government. So it essentially . . . We administer that for them, for municipalities, but it's flow-through from the federal government to the municipalities. So I'll get Keith to just explain more detail to you on that Building Canada Fund.

**Mr. Comstock:** — Thanks, Minister. So the New Building Canada Fund has a number of components, and the one that is specific that we want to . . . that you have asked about is the provincial territorial infrastructure component/small communities fund, and that is embedded in that number. The way that program is administered is when communities take advantage of that program, the province pays both shares, both the federal and the provincial share of the support that's granted, and then Canada pays the province back for that.

The other part of the New Building Canada Fund, the NIC [national infrastructure component] and the national regional project component, works differently, that we pay our share and Canada pays its share so the communities have a funding agreement with both senior levels of government. So it is a bit confusing, but as the minister noted in that \$28.4 million there's about \$7 million that accounts for what we suspect, what we expect to be the federal share of the projects in this coming year. And then as the minister mentioned, the 60.140 million from the Gas Tax Fund which is flow-through money.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Okay. I heard that the federal government was going to start putting in 50 per cent. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — That's two recently announced tranches. There's a component on water and waste water and there's a component on transit. But that was recently announced. That wouldn't be reflected in any of this yet. You'll see that in future items.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — So would the province be matching what the federal government will be putting towards new infrastructure?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — On this or on the new tranches?

**Ms. Rancourt:** — On that. Like the 50 per cent. When the federal government will be investing 50 per cent, will the province match that as well?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — No determination's been made on that yet. That's relatively new. There'd be I guess two schools of thought on that, if you would. For example, SUMA's [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] position on that is that they like the province to continue to put in 33 per cent so municipalities would . . . their share left then would be 17 per cent.

I don't know if any provinces have actually made the decisions yet but the other school of thought of course would be if the feds put in 50 per cent and the province puts in 25 and municipalities put in 25, you would get more projects funded. So that's kind of the balance, counterbalances. Do you want more projects done or do you want municipalities to save the money on it? So no final determination's been made yet.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — The 10 million that was given for the commuter bridge in Saskatoon, how was this arranged with the municipality, and how are the other proportions of the bridge funded?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — The balance of the bridge funding is the responsibility of the municipality. That's part of an overall \$50 million component that's going to be paid to the city over a period of years. And to your initial question which, how was that arranged with the city, discussions were had with the city based sort of on what their needs were, based on their construction schedule.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — I recently heard that there was some recent changes for the municipal elections, and so I was wondering what kind of changes were that that was entailed.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Okay. Those changes were made a little while ago. We're going to test John Edwards from the ministry's memory on this. There was a rewrite done on *The Local Government Election Act*. There were significant changes made. It was sort of to bring rural and urban, as much as possible, coordinate it. So there was that and there was a number of other changes. I'll just get John to . . . As I said, I'll test his memory and get him to review that with us.

**Mr. Edwards:** — So the main focus of the changes that were made, we basically rewrote the statute. Previously we had consolidated into one statute the urban and rural election provisions, but they were in separate parts. So what happened with the new Act was that all of the areas where there were consistent provisions for urban and rural municipalities, we basically brought those together into single provisions.

In some cases there are good reasons why the provisions for elections in urban and rural aren't the same, and in those cases we maintained the provisions. So that was sort of the main thrust of the changes. There were a number of regulatory provisions that were brought in subsequently by regulation, and a lot of that was consolidating the election forms that were used by urban and rural municipalities. We were able to basically get rid of a significant number of forms that were repetitious.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Because my understanding was that due to some of the changes, that it minimized how many special polls there was, or fewer polls. And so the concern is, is there special provisions to help encourage voter turnout, especially for

people who have mobility issues?

**Mr. Edwards:** — There were no changes made in the number of polls, so that's a decision that's made locally. So each municipality, say for example the city of Prince Albert, would make their own decisions on the number of polling stations that they wanted to have. Over the last number of years, we've made changes to try and accommodate people in situations like special care homes or hospitals or other cases where they have limited mobility. But that's been a sort of a consistent pattern over a number of years.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Voter turnout has been really significantly low for municipal elections. Are you guys planning on doing anything to help encourage higher voter turnout?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I think the issue that you're speaking to, voter turnout, it's not unique to municipal elections. It's not unique to Saskatchewan provincial elections or even to Canada. I think jurisdictions all around the world struggle with how to deal with low voter turnout. It's no different here. We didn't put any specific measures in place to address it because certainly there is no, no quick, easy answer to that.

We're certainly . . . My officials and I are always open to suggestions. We're always willing to listen to municipalities and the municipal groups, SUMA, SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], if they have any suggestions on where we'd want to go with that. Certainly when we make changes to *The Local Government Election Act* or any municipal legislation, we always do a great deal of consulting with them and we would handle any measures dealing with voter turnout in the same way.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — All right. I feel like I'm flip-flopping with issues, but this is such a huge portfolio here so now I'm going to turn over to some issues with regards to landfills. So how many landfills are currently being used in Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Just before I get into that, if I could, in your hometown I guess a news story published today, the headline says, "Seniors get more polling stations," and there is a news story about the city adding, it says, "a dozen special civic election polling stations added at seniors' buildings . . ." So I think that speaks to the point that John had made earlier. I'm not sure where you got your information from that somehow we restricted that, but clearly that's wrong.

Now on the landfill issue, it's probably a question that's better addressed to Environment. But if you help me with sort of the track you're going down, information like to get to, maybe I can . . . We'll attempt to help you, but that would be a question that would be better for Environment.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Okay, because I've been talking to a lot of people in municipalities and they have been saying that landfill issues have been a big issue concerning them as of recently, and so I did some more research with regards to that. And they're looking at doing regional waste management systems, and for some smaller municipalities the landfill that they might be using could be a distance away from where their community is. So I guess if you don't have the answer of how many landfills there are in Saskatchewan, I guess maybe you could help me to see if

there's going to be any additional help with the cost of the regional waste management systems.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Certainly. That would fall under the Ministry of the Environment. The question would be better put there. I would just speak to I guess overall sort of supports that this government has given to municipalities. You know, I certainly recognize there's municipalities in my constituency that deal with those same issues, with landfill issues.

Funding for municipalities under this government, I look at municipal revenue sharing . . . To say it's at record levels frankly undermines where it's at. It's astronomical compared to where it used to be. You know, you asked questions earlier yourself about infrastructure projects. There's significant funding, I would say record amounts of funding on infrastructure. So you know, on the revenue-sharing side, municipalities are free to use that money as they see fit, but as far as specific programs for landfills, that would be better put to Environment. But I think I would just leave it there.

[21:30]

**Ms. Rancourt:** — I was told that there was a tax credit for volunteer firefighters. I was wondering if that was still available, and if it is, can you provide me a little bit more information with regards to that?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I think what you'd be speaking to is an election platform commitment and part of the commitment was, I believe it was when the budget was balanced, that that would be one of the initiatives that we'd implement at that time.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Okay, so there's been no decision with regards to that.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Well that was the commitment. So that commitment will be kept but it wouldn't be implemented this year.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — From what I've heard, training for volunteer firefighters is difficult for volunteers to arrange to go to. Would the government consider paying volunteers to attend training so that they can afford to take a leave from work?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — So to your question about volunteer firefighters and paying them, I certainly don't see that happening. Emergency response firefighting is of course a municipal responsibility but we recognize the significant role that they play, so we're certainly going to do everything we can to coordinate and help.

Typically the training that they receive, we try to do that on weekends to accommodate as many of them as possible that way, to avoid excess time from work. And there's a number of other things our officials do. Duane McKay, he's here. Duane and his branch have a great relationship with municipalities and fire departments around the province. And I'll just ask Duane to elaborate on things we do to help assist volunteer firefighters.

**Mr. McKay:** — Okay. Duane McKay, fire commissioner. So the issue of training is always a challenge for small volunteer fire departments, but as a result of that they have come up with



some very unique and innovative ways to address those issues. As the minister has already mentioned, much of the training is done in the evenings when people are readily available, typically just gathering a number of people to a single location so they can go through the training. It is typically off-duty time for their regular employment.

In addition to that, the Saskatchewan Volunteer Fire Fighters Association many years ago picked up sort of the challenge in terms of providing certified training, and they do this in a variety of different ways. They have conferences twice a year where volunteer firefighters or career firefighters can attend and take different modules that might be available. Those can range anywhere from ropes and knots, ladders, self-preservation, interior attack rescue, inspections, investigations, and so on. And that's typically done at a host community where firefighters come together.

In the last few years, we've seen a increase in the interest there. I think at the last conference it was close to 300 firefighters showed up for the training, and that is done at a very reduced cost for them. So typically there is a small fee paid to cover the cost of the instructors. The rest of the time is basically volunteer for the instructors. And of course the people show up, and it's typically done starting on a Friday late afternoon. So they go through the evening, through Saturday and into Sunday, and typically are done by noon. And in that, they have award ceremonies as well, so it's an opportunity for the volunteer fire service to come together and get the training they require.

We provide, the province does provide certification where that is requested, and we also provide equipment that helps reduce the impact on the host community. So we'll provide trainers. We'll supply typically breathing air, compressors to refill those, and basically anything else that they require that we would use from our emergency response caches.

So although training is always a challenge, there is a very unique delivery model in Saskatchewan delivered by the fire service and supported by the province.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — How many volunteer firefighter detachments are there in Saskatchewan?

**Mr. McKay:** — Well it depends. There is approximately 400 active fire departments in the province, but they range in terms of their capacity based on the risks that they might face. In some cases, in very small communities we would see, you know, maybe half a dozen people that come together to form the fire department and are supported obviously by the municipality. And that ranges up to very sophisticated volunteer departments where they are quite active in large communities: Warman, some of the areas in Martensville and so on, in sort of the metropolitan areas of the urbans. Then it goes obviously into large fire departments which the cities would have, and of course they can range up to close to 300 members. Of course they're a career and they get paid to do the work that they're engaged in.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — So the volunteers, do they have to have a certain level of training before they can even respond to a situation?

**Mr. McKay:** — So typically the training is done based on sort of a competency. In other words, the training is quite technical, but you're only required to receive the training necessary for the tasks that you're going to perform. So that would be, consideration would be . . . In terms of a fire department that doesn't have a breathing apparatus for instance, their policies would say they don't go inside of a building. So it's very defensive. And so the training that those individuals would be required would be pumps, hose lays, handling hose streams and so on, as opposed to a fire department that has more capability and does rescue and so on. It might do high-angle rescue, rope rescue, trench rescue and so on, and of course the training then would be enhanced.

The training again can be certified in which case the province has . . . We hold the certifying capability and we'll go out and test them if that's what they wish. But it's not required for volunteers. What is required is they're competent, and that is supported by training records which fire chiefs and fire administration and municipalities will hold for their training that they take. It's recorded and tested in-house.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Would you get any information if a volunteer was hurt in the line of duty at all?

**Mr. McKay:** — Yes, the province actually provides dispatching services for a large number of these fire departments. So we keep a very close eye on sort of what's going on, and certainly if there's an injury we are notified. The reporting structure for departments is to report injuries, both civilian injuries or casualties related to the fire as well as firefighter injuries, so we would be notified if any injuries occurred.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — In the past year, has there been any critical incidences?

**Mr. McKay:** — There hasn't been any injuries, physical injuries that have been reported, in other words loss of work or so on. We are monitoring obviously psychological injuries. You know, there is more than physical; I mean some of these people go to traumatic incidents. And so we are working closely with the fire chiefs association, with the volunteer firefighters association to establish critical incident stress management functions. Several training sessions have been held, and there is a number of the volunteers that would respond to even that type of incident.

Certainly we sent them up to support the firefighters that were in La Loche, for instance, that responded to that incident and it gives them a chance to do some debriefing and help mitigate any of those types of injuries. So we've tried to look at a very comprehensive role in supporting the volunteers to ensure that the valuable work that they're doing, that they can do it in a safe manner and not have any long-term injuries either way.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Thank you. So my next question is what is happening with the fire prevention training and programming in particular with children?

**Mr. McKay:** — So in all cases fire prevention is a significant issue. If we can stop a fire from occurring, then certainly that reduces the cost to the municipality, reduces danger to the

individuals and so on. There is a number of public education programs that we're involved in, and these are events that, or programs that we attempt to work with our neighbouring provinces as well.

We do have a school program where the one week of every year is dedicated to teaching young children from kindergarten to grade 3. That program's been going for several years and it is done in cooperation with Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba as well. So it's the same week, same program all the way across. We do have in the first week of October is Fire Prevention Week. We do a lot of work to ensure that we use that week to highlight fire safety. And there's a lot of programs that go on across the province that we support in terms of smoke detectors and checking those things and so on.

In addition to that, we do have some programs that are more specific to older youth and children around babysitting and so on that really focus not just on fire safety, but on sort of safety in general, and we support those programs. We have made arrangements with National Fire Protection Association to get materials distributed through Ontario for the fire services to get at, in some cases, very reduced costs so that those things are available if they're running those locally as well.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Would you know if that fire prevention program that you were talking about that's done in the schools, if that's also done on reserve schools?

**Mr. McKay:** — Yes, it's open to all schools. It isn't 100 per cent. I think in Saskatoon the school division has not taken it up, however, in terms of the program that we're pushing. But all of the materials are online and certainly anybody can download them, and they are approved through the Ministry of Education.

In addition to those things, not related specifically to fire but to 911, we have also materials, public education materials for there, and they are published in multiple languages to address our newcomers coming into Saskatchewan from other countries where English is not their primary language, but all of the First Nation languages as well, from Dene to Cree to Saulteaux, all of those as well.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — When STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society] or air ambulances land in an RM, the local fire department has to go out and secure the highway, and that could be of a cost of about \$600, I was told. So we have heard from folks that you have directed them to the Ministry of Health and that the government of Health directed them back to this ministry. So who's responsible for this, and are there any plans to work alongside the RMs on this issue?

[21:45]

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — This is one of those issues that there's just no easy answer to. I certainly have a lot of sympathy for the services municipalities are providing in these cases. And there's always a question about what's sort of appropriate responsibility of municipal government; what's appropriate responsibility of provincial.

I certainly hope that situation that you referred to didn't happen,

or if it did, I hope it's certainly isolated if two ministries are directing people back and forth. If you'd like to, whichever municipality that was, if you'd like to provide that with me later, I'd be happy to contact them.

To the issue though of where we're going to deal with . . . SARM recently at a convention passed a resolution dealing with this. And I think the short answer is that we — and I'm saying the collective "we," meaning provincial government, whether it's our ministry or the Ministry of Health, and I'll do this in coordination with Minister Duncan and Minister Ottenbreit — but we'll certainly meet with SARM and discuss the issue and see where we can go from here.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Okay. So there were increased costs for air ambulance fees; however there weren't increased costs for STARS. Some rural municipalities, based on their location, are less likely to be serviced by STARS than the air ambulance. Why were decisions made that make rural folks pay more if they require air ambulance but not if they require STARS?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I'm sorry, can you just elaborate? The start of your question, you said the increased fees. I don't . . .

**Ms. Rancourt:** — There was increased fees on the air ambulance, but not on the STARS. But in some locations STARS ambulance can't reach there so we have to send an air ambulance. So we're making people who are in more remote areas have to pay more for ambulance fees.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Yes, fees for those type of services would be better put to Health. That's a different ministry.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Okay. I'd like to ask a question about what work may have been done by the minister concerning eliminating discrimination regarding ambulance caps provided to all Saskatchewan seniors except status First Nations seniors. My concern is that First Nations do not have the return ambulance transfers covered. Last year you said there was a meeting some time around the end of March involving the ministry officials from your ministry, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Social Services and federal officials. What work have you done to address and solve the issue of the discrimination faced by First Nations?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Were you referring to comments last year in estimates? Again this is one of those issues that, again because of the First Nations component to your question, it's very cross-ministry. It is primarily a Health question, though. If I could, if you'd bear with me, I will assure you I will discuss it with my colleagues, ministers Ottenbreit and Duncan, and if you like I can either speak to you or provide a written response to your question.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Okay. Because last year you also said that this was primarily being dealt with by the Health ministry, but the Health minister just told my colleague that they don't know what you're talking about. And so can you update us on what came out of those meetings or what action has been done or is being done?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Well if I could . . . You were referencing last year in estimates in committee. That would be April 27,

2015. And I would just refer you to my answer at that time. Our officials are telling me, for example, of a meeting that was held some time around the end of March involving officials from our ministry, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Services, and federal officials that had discussion at that. But this is primarily being dealt with in the Health ministry, so I don't want to mislead you. It hasn't had extensive discussion in our ministry. I would suggest it's been primarily in Health, so I'm at a loss to your comments about the questioning in the other committee. But I'm not sure where you want to go with this. So again if you'd bear with me, I'll speak to my colleagues in Health and get you a written response.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — I'd appreciate that because it sounds like it's been kind of a dropped issue if Mr. Duncan doesn't understand what's going on also. So an answer would be appreciated.

So my next question is with regards to the 911 call centre. How many positions are employed in that call centre?

**Mr. McKay:** — The call centre right now has approximately 70 employees overall. That would include call takers, technical support, and all the related functions associated with the operation.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — And is there any changes planned for the call centre?

**Mr. McKay:** — So changes in the 911 centre — the 911 centre has seen some significant growth over the last several years. As I had mentioned before with respect to the services provided, the 911 system in itself is divided between three public safety answering points. The city of Saskatoon, the city of Regina operate the 911 call taking within their respective jurisdictions, and all of the other 911 calls in the province are answered in Prince Albert.

In addition to call taking, they also provide dispatching services to almost all of the fire departments, so close to 400 fire departments and several ministries related to public safety, and they include the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure for the highway patrol group, for the Ministry of Corrections and Policing, and for Environment for their conservation officers, as well as the environment protection officers. In addition to that, there's a number of community services officers — they'd be like bylaw enforcement officers for municipalities — that we provide services as well.

As a result of that growth, we have recently looked at a change in location, and we have partnered with NRCan [Natural Resources Canada], which holds a facility just outside of the city of Prince Albert. It's a satellite downloading station, and within the very near future, that will become the new location for the 911 centre. That will give us the ability to have a stable environment with a specifically developed building that is for technical services and has all of the facilities required for the large amount of data that moves through there. NRCan's downloading system was built there in '96, and obviously technology is shrinking, so there's a lot of room there for us, and that'll give us an opportunity.

So location as well as new technology going in there. Next generation 911 phone system will be activated very soon. And

that will give us the ability to do things in the future as people's communications change with respect to texting, which is not going to be open for the public but for the people of hard of hearing or deaf. They'll be able to text their 911 calls from a smartphone. Much the same as all of us take for granted that we can call any time that we want, they are unable to do that. They have to have a special device, which is like a computer, and very soon they will be able to text 911. So there's a lot of technical changes as well as location changes that are taking place right now.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — So when you move into this new location in Prince Albert, does that mean that the Saskatoon and Regina locations will close?

**Mr. McKay:** — No, not at all. One of the key components of any mission critical communications centre is to make sure that we have redundancy. So the 911 system specifically, if any one of those three PSAPs [public service answering points] becomes inactive for whatever reason or overwhelmed, the 911 system rolls into one of the other locations. So we could have an incident somewhere in the province or in one of the cities that would generate a large number of calls, and once the operators are busy, there's pre-set determinations that would roll those 911 calls immediately into the other centres, and they would be able to be transferred. So the key here is not to have people waiting on a 911 call. There is obviously a number of calls that are not emergencies, pocket dials and so on, but we never know when a real call comes in. And so we have that redundancy, so there'll be no changes to the system there, just more capacity in the provincial emergency communication centre.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — If I could, just before we go to the next question, I just want to revisit a question you had asked earlier about the situation with on-reserve First Nations. Now clearly you're getting some information from some of your officials about what's going on in the other committees. So our officials checked, and I would suggest the information we're getting is not the same information you're getting or you or your officials misconstrued it.

The point that was made by the Health minister, as I understand it, was that it was trying to be dealt with very much at an official level, that for many years provincial officials have been trying to deal with federal officials on that matter, and there was not much success. But that is the crux of the issue, is that on-reserve is a federal responsibility. Off-reserve is where the province is more directly involved.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — So a First Nations senior can go to a hospital by the ambulance from the First Nations reserve to the hospital, but they can't have that ambulance transfer paid back, to go back to the First Nations.

[22:00]

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I think that was my point on that. That question should more appropriately be directed to Health who has in the past tried to work with federal officials on that. That was the point I made last year. At the time, I was trying to be helpful, pointing out that our ministry is trying to assist wherever they can, but on-reserve clearly, as you know, is a

federal responsibility.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Okay. Well we'll figure that out. We'll work that out with both ministries. But getting back to the 911 call centres, so if there's 70 employees, do you know how that breaks down within Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert?

**Mr. McKay:** — So there's 70 employees in the provincial centre, so that's the ones that sort of run the overall system. So that would include call-takers, technical support people, and so on. And we pay for 10 positions in each of Saskatoon and Regina as well as some nominal fees for support services and so on.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — And then getting back to this new location that you'll be going to, will that include more jobs?

**Mr. McKay:** — The levels of service are really dependent upon the demands. So we want to make sure that we're meeting the national and international standards for answering those calls. And so over the years as we monitor that — and we have a very sophisticated way to monitor the number of calls to come in and the time it takes to answer those calls and transfer and so on — we monitor those, and when we get to the point where we think that we need to increase staff, then we increase that.

The same goes for dispatching. So a number of call-takers and a number of people that are providing dispatch and support services are really based on our ability to meet those performance standards, and those performance standards are the same in all three public safety answering points. So the increase in staffing would be directly related to performance. So if there is an increase, then we would obviously have more people to meet those performance standards.

It also is good management in order to make sure that we have a threshold above the minimum to ensure that — when somebody is sick or needs time off or just needs to take, you know, some training or whatever — would be that we're not into an overtime situation there. So we monitor based on those management practices. But it's really primarily driven by our ability to meet those standards.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — So is there any plans on decreasing staff within the 911?

**Mr. McKay:** — What we're seeing is an increase in demand. People generate those calls, and so the more people we have, the more that they will use the system. So we haven't seen any indication that we would see any decrease with any respect to performance.

In addition to that, the amount of technology that we're needing to put into place to meet the increasing demands from different groups as well as the requirements that the CRTC [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission] is placing on telcos that provide the infrastructure . . . Yes, we only see an increase in terms of meeting the performance standard, so there's no decrease that we can see.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — So this was an issue that was brought up at SUMA and SARM. Are there any plans to address the understaffed RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police]

detachments in small municipalities?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Again this probably isn't the appropriate ministry to be asking this question. It would be more appropriately put to Corrections and Policing. You know, I am aware though, that there are . . . You know, much of the staffing is decided by the RCMP themselves, although there is some programs where individual municipalities can help assist in the cost and get some extra policing. But that question would better be put to Corrections and Policing.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Okay. The reason why I brought it up to this table was because I know that was quite a contentious issue with regards to those organizations. Some of the people brought it up a few times.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — You said that was at a SARM convention?

**Ms. Rancourt:** — I heard it was brought up in SUMA and SARM.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Okay. Certainly as minister I attend all those conventions. My background's with SARM, as a board of director there. You'll find, once you're around for a while, that those organizations, while they're a municipal association, they deal with a sort of broad range of issues that include many ministries. So just because it's an issue at their convention doesn't necessarily mean it would pertain automatically to this ministry. They deal with a number of ministries.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Would you bring that up to the minister responsible for that?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I'm sorry. What was the question?

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Well since it was brought up at the table of people that you represent, would you bring that up to the minister in charge of that portfolio?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — When SUMA or SARM passes a resolution at their convention, there's a process that's followed. They'll forward it to the appropriate minister. So I would assume in this case, if a resolution was passed as you said, the minister would have already received a letter from either SARM or SUMA or both and likely would have responded to them by now.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Can you provide a brief update on the work of the public safety telecommunication network, and what was the total money spent?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Our deputy minister, Al Hilton, is going to respond to the question you had just previously.

I just want to again come back to the comments you made earlier about the ambulance service. I think it's pretty clear that what you're doing is passing those back and forth between your colleague in the Health committee right now. And I realize you're new here, but what you might want to do is get your facts straight before you start saying them in this committee.

We've been checking. I didn't believe that Minister Duncan would refer to something as flippantly as you positioned it to

be. I'm told that he did lay out what the ambulance policies are to Ms. Chartier and now, which I find even more bizarre, is I'm told she's down there saying that Reiter is deflecting this to you and is asking questions about SUMA.

So I realize you're new here, but you might want to get your ducks in a row before you come into committee. And I would suggest that while politics I realize is very partisan, this game playing is more than a little unbecoming. I'd ask Al to answer that question now.

**The Chair:** — I'm going to interject here . . . [inaudible] . . . and ask that you not . . . to refrain from bringing other committee work into your line of questioning because it's not helpful to yourself or to the minister who you're supposed to be asking specific questions on. So I would just ask you to consider that please. Thank you.

**Mr. Hilton:** — Thank you. So the provincial public safety telecommunications network is a partnership between the Government of Saskatchewan, SaskPower, and the RCMP. We pushed the start button on it January 1, 2011. The operating costs associated with the PPSTN [provincial public safety telecommunications network] are not funded by the General Revenue Fund; however the capital is. So every year each of the partners set aside a certain amount of capital to keep the system what we call evergreen, i.e. to make sure that everything remains modern. And then the government reflects the cost of that capital through amortization, which you would see on page 71 of the main estimates.

Since we implemented the system, we've sort of improved it over time, identified gaps of coverage. I stand to be corrected by my commissioner, but I think we have over 270 tower sites at the moment, and we have over 9,000 radios out in use amongst all the various users. So it's become a really . . . It's really become integrated with the 911 system and represents a pretty significant public safety telecommunications network, you know, for the province.

[22:15]

**Ms. Rancourt:** — So how often was SaskAlert used last year?

**Mr. Hilton:** — So you're asking about SaskAlert now, nothing about PPSTN?

**Ms. Rancourt:** — That's right.

**Mr. Hilton:** — Okay, thank you.

**Mr. McKay:** — So SaskAlert is a new program that we put into place, and we've been working on it for approximately a year. We've partnered with the province of Alberta. They have had an alerting system in place for many years, just over 20-some years, and rather than do something new, we decided that we would partner with them and learn from the lessons that they've had and their experience. And they went live just a short period of time ago, about a year ago.

So the number of alerts that we have, I don't have the exact number, but I would point out that there are two types of alerts that can be issued through the program. One is an urgent alert

which is basically information, critical information that a person living in a municipality or a particular area that would need to know. It might be related to a blockage in traffic, a delay in services of some sort. And then there is the priority one alerts, which are immediate information that could have an impact on people's life, safety. Those would be the type that we would see typically interrupting broadcast information on the radio or television and so on.

During the last year or so, we have been doing a lot of training with municipalities and First Nations, so there would be a large number of training alerts that would have been put out. These would be the second, the non-critical ones, the non-life threatening ones, and those would be a large number because they were training and, you know, people walking through the program and so on. But there has only been a few over the last year of the priority one alerts.

We did issue a couple of those alerts in La Ronge with respect to the evacuation notices that went through. And there has been perhaps a few municipalities that have issued those related to boil water advisories, you know, something that you don't want people drinking water because it's contaminated in some way. So there's been a few of those, but I don't have a total number. Like I said, the training ones and the secondary alerts, we don't track a lot of those. They're done by the municipalities, but there would be a large number of those, but only a few of the priority one alerts at this point.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — How many claims were made last year to the provincial disaster assistance program?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Total claims from 2015 were 298.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — And do you know how much the total amount of the claims were?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — You know, if I could, I'll give you a bit of breakdown maybe on what those 298 claims are comprised of: 126 were principal residence; 18 were small business; 52 were primary ag enterprise; 71 were municipal; 1 was First Nations; 7 was charitable organizations; 2 were boards or co-operatives; relocations, temporary relocations were 10; renter was 1; and ones that didn't fall into any of those main categories, there was 10. That totals 298.

Now the dollar amount so far we have what was spent to date was \$11.7 million, but some of those claims — that was just last year — 71 of those claims are still active. They're not closed yet, so that dollar amount would build as more claims are made, as more of those files closed.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — We know that there's been some delays with the feds regarding payments. Is that any better?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — There is always some delay in the payments. Our officials try to work with federal officials until the claims year is closed off. We will, you know, often request, for example, an advance payment. But if your question is sort of . . . You said, is that any better? If you're meaning has there been sort of change in that process since the election of the new government, I would think, officials tell me, you know, that process is running pretty much the same as it has been for a

number of years.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Do you have a plan in addressing the 1 in 500 flood zones?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — So your question was a plan for the 1 in 500. The only city that it's an issue with right now is the city of Prince Albert. The other cities have all complied. Arrangements have been made with the city of Prince Albert to give them to the end of the year to come up with a plan to comply with the 1 in 500 requirement. My understanding is they're working right now with the Water Security Agency to, if you will, they're giving assistance to decide what they would need to prepare in order to comply with that.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Okay. How many communities in Saskatchewan currently have the official community plan?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — The officials are telling me that it would be approximately 50 per cent.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Okay.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — To add to that, they're also telling me that while 50 per cent of the communities is roughly . . . Those communities that do have are covering approximately 80 per cent of the population of the province.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Okay. In the past year, how many grants were given under the Consultation Participation Fund for First Nations and Métis communities?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — In the '15-16 fiscal year there would have been 32 grants that were approved, and the funding approved would have been \$214,000.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Okay. So duty to consult workshops as a performance measure in the Ministry of Government Relations plan for 2016-17, can you explain this a little bit?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — So you'd like some details on the information that was provided in the workshops. Is that what you're asking?

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Well it's a goal for you guys to be having these duty to consult workshops. What was the purpose of having the workshops? And if you already had them, have they been successful?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — I'll just ask Tricia to give that detail, please.

**Ms. Delormier-Hill:** — Tricia Delormier-Hill with the lands and consultation branch within the Ministry of Government Relations. In our area, we have officials who work with other officials within the ministries of Environment and Justice to put on workshops that would help to inform other officials that need to carry out duty to consult processes on behalf of their ministry. And so those workshops are ongoing and are provided on an as-needs basis. We also conduct other events and outreach type workshops with industry sectors that inquire and ask about that information.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — And the result of having those workshops, has that increased the amount of grants?

**Ms. Delormier-Hill:** — I think that it does have some impact on it because we do discuss our First Nations and Métis consultation policy framework and, as part of that policy, we also have the First Nation and Métis Consultation Participation Fund, which we provide information on as well. And so that may have some impact on the increase.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — My next question is, I saw a little bit of information about the seniors' home security program but not too much, so I was wondering if you can explain a little bit more about that.

[22:30]

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — That was a program that was, if memory serves, it was part of the 2011 election platform. I think it was at that time . . . In the platform, we committed to a four-year program. Again you're testing my memory a bit because it's a few years ago, but I think it was a four-year program and last year would have been the final year of the four years. So it essentially ran its course and is wound down now.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — What did it entail?

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — So where the program's targeted, it was for seniors whose household net income was \$35,000 or less annually or seniors who had been the victim of a break and enter or home invasion. And it covered a number of different things. It covered the costs around, for example, a home safety assessment; installation of equipment like deadbolts, door viewers, and smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. That's sort of the broad view of what it did. Just to give you an idea of the uptake on it, in 2011-12 there was 149 installations done. In 2012-13 there was 129. In 2013-14 there was 229. And in 2014-15 there was 160. So you know, I think overall it was reasonably successful and it met the commitment from the election campaign.

**Ms. Rancourt:** — It sounds like it was a really important program. It's unfortunate that that was discontinued. But it looks like our time is over. And this is the end of the questions that I have, so I think it would be okay to end at this point. So I just again want to thank all of the officials that are here, and thanks for listening to my questions and answering them. And I appreciate all your feedback, and thanks again.

**The Chair:** — Thank you very much. I would like the minister to make some closing comments. We have some time remaining.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank you and all the committee members for your attendance tonight. And I'd like to thank the opposition members, both yourself and the previous two gentlemen who participated in questions. I'd like to thank you for the questions. And I absolutely would like to thank all the officials who stayed here for all the hours tonight for their support. And again thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** — Well thank you very much, Minister. I think

each and every one of us appreciate both yourself and all your officials coming out this evening, giving up their time and serving the province of Saskatchewan. So thank you very much.

And seeing that we have passed the daily hour of adjournment, this committee stands adjourned until the call of the Chair, which is until June 22nd at 3 p.m. We will now adjourn.

[The committee adjourned at 22:37.]