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# **Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Wednesday, November 28, 2018**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable MaryAnn Mihychuk**



## Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

Wednesday, November 28, 2018

• (1545)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.)):** Hello, everybody. Let's get started.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(5), we have supplementary estimates (A), 2018-19: votes 1a, 5a and 10a under the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and votes 1a, 5a and 10a under the Department of Indigenous Services Canada, referred to the committee on Wednesday, October 24, 2018.

We are the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, and we will have the opportunity to hear from two ministers whom we deal with directly.

Before we get started, we always recognize the fact that we're in a process of truth and reconciliation in Canada and that, in fact, these Parliament buildings are on unceded Algonquin territory. We do that when we are anywhere in Canada, and I encourage all Canadians to review the history of settlement and our relationship with indigenous peoples.

Today we start off with the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

Welcome once again to our committee.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations):** Thank you. It's great to be back.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for inviting us to be here with you all today.

[Translation]

I would like to begin by acknowledging, as you have also mentioned, that we come together on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

[English]

We're pleased to be here this afternoon to discuss the supplementary estimates (A) for the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, specifically as they relate to my responsibilities as Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

I am joined by Daniel Watson, our new deputy minister, who I don't think has been with us here before. He comes from Parks Canada, so he knows a lot about reconciliation. I am also joined by Alex Lakroni, chief finances, results and delivery officer, both for

the Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

We are appearing in the context of the ongoing changes to the departmental organization and ministerial responsibilities to fulfill our commitment to replace the colonial structures that were conceived at another time with a different kind of relationship.

As you know, to better support our government's commitment to renew relationships with first nations, Inuit, and Métis on a foundation of recognition and implementation of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership, as the Prime Minister put into the mandate letters of all ministers, the Prime Minister announced the dissolution of the old Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs in August 2017.

The dissolution of the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada reflects the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and the two new departments, we believe, are already better serving the distinct needs of first nations, Inuit, and Métis.

The first nations and Inuit health branch has already been integrated into the new Department of Indigenous Services, and Minister Philpott, whom you will be hearing from later today, is focused on improving outcomes for indigenous peoples by delivering more effective, distinctions-based services, as well as focusing on prevention.

I'm focused on advancing reconciliation with indigenous peoples by redressing long-standing historical injustices while accelerating our work to support first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples to implement their visions of self-determination.

[Translation]

We are committed to moving from a denial of rights approach to one that recognizes and affirms rights.

[English]

In support of that vision, we are working in partnership with first nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples to create a new recognition and implementation of indigenous rights framework. Among the points of consensus from indigenous partners is that the framework should include accountability measures to ensure that Canada is fully implementing indigenous treaties and rights and acting transparently.

Our continuing engagement is building upon the more than 100 sessions I have personally attended, with more than 1,700 participants, which have been held coast to coast to ensure that the framework reflects the views of indigenous peoples.

[Translation]

Engagement with our partners is ongoing, and we are moving forward, together. We are absolutely determined to get this right.

[English]

In August 2018, Minister LeBlanc assumed responsibility to lead our government's work in the north, including the new Arctic policy for Canada. I remain focused on strengthening and renewing the relationship between the federal government and the indigenous peoples of the north. Minister LeBlanc and I work very closely together to ensure that northern policy is developed by northerners for northerners, and that it reflects the unique perspectives of indigenous peoples in the north in a manner that respects their distinct cultural traditions and identities.

These and other initiatives are ensuring that we close the socio-economic gap between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous Canadians, advancing reconciliation and making foundational changes to accelerate self-determination.

The supplementary estimates (A) reflect a net increase of \$1.7 billion, which brings the total appropriation for 2018-19 for the department to \$4.9 billion. The vast majority of these requested funds are to resolve long-standing litigation and to support concrete self-determination measures, including the \$155 million for the sixties scoop settlement, \$666 million for special claims out of the Williams Treaties, \$239 million for the Little Red River Cree Nation agricultural benefits specific claims, and \$53.9 million for other out-of-court settlements. There is \$116 million that is to be reprofiled back to the specific claims settlement fund, and \$129 million to support the implementation of the government-to-government relationship with the Manitoba Metis Federation.

• (1550)

[Translation]

The Sixties Scoop is a dark and painful chapter in Canada's history.

[English]

The requested \$155 million will fund the approved settlement, which resolves the issues raised by the longest-standing case of ongoing litigation and similar class actions. Sixties scoop survivors have also identified their desire to reconnect with their communities, and that is why the settlement includes \$50 million for a foundation for healing, commemoration, education, language and culture.

Our government knows there are other claims that remain unresolved, and we are committed to addressing the remaining harm suffered by other indigenous children as a result of the sixties scoop.

The funding of \$666 million is to make settlement payments to the seven Williams Treaties First Nations, which will resolve the Alderville litigation. The Williams Treaties First Nations have been fighting in court for more than 25 years to redress injustices involving compensation, land and harvesting rights dating back to 1923.

Earlier this month, the settlement of these long-standing claims was celebrated at a moving ceremony that I was honoured to attend

with the Williams Treaty chiefs, community members and the Government of Ontario. Achieved through dialogue and in partnership, it includes financial compensation, recognition of treaty harvesting rights and entitlement to add additional reserve land.

[Translation]

Canada and Ontario also apologized for the negative impacts of these treaties.

[English]

As Chief Kelly LaRocca has said, "this settlement agreement marks the beginning of healing for our people."

Canada has also been negotiating with 21 first nations to resolve specific claims alleging that Canada failed to provide agricultural benefits under Treaty 8.

[Translation]

Agreements have been signed with 18 First Nations, and funds have been paid.

[English]

The related \$239 million in supplementary estimates is to fund the settlement with Little Red River Cree Nation, which is one of three remaining first nations, out of the 21, still to receive payment.

As these concrete examples show, our government understands that negotiation rather than litigation is the best way to right historical wrongs and settle past grievances. I also think it's important to highlight that these settlements resolve legal liabilities of the Government of Canada. We believe that resolving litigation out of court is not only the right thing to do, but the most responsible and effective way to manage taxpayers' dollars. Negotiated settlements are not only often less costly, but able to achieve investments in healing, commemoration, wellness and culture initiatives, in addition to the compensation.

[Translation]

We are also moving forward with renewed nation-to-nation, government-to-government and Inuit-to-Crown relationships.

• (1555)

[English]

The funding of \$129 million is for the implementation of a renewed government-to-government relationship with the Manitoba Metis Federation. This includes funding to support governance capacity to assist the Manitoba Metis Federation in its transition from a corporate entity to a government and to implement its vision of greater self-determination. Its negotiations with the Government of Canada represent the first self-government negotiations between Canada and a Métis collective south of 60 and will include discussions to establish a long-term self-government fiscal relationship.

The funding requested through supplementary estimates (A) supports our government's commitment to honour treaties, resolve claims through negotiations and accelerate indigenous self-determination.

I urge you to approve these supplementary estimates, and I look forward to taking your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister Bennett. You're right on time.

We'll open up the questioning with MP Mike Bossio.

**Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you so much, Minister, for making the time once again—as you have so often—to come to our committee and hear our questions and expand on some of your remarks.

In your remarks, you outlined your broad approach to the rights recognition and implementation framework. The government said from day one that it would renew the relationship with first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples “based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership”.

We have heard a strong expectation from indigenous partners that the framework be properly co-developed. There seems to be a desire for continued engagement. As the national chief said, indigenous groups aren't necessarily saying no to the framework, but they do want to make sure they are not rushed. Members of the committee, who presumably will be involved in the review of any legislation, are also very interested in the timing of the process.

Can you update us on how long you think the consultation process will take and when we will likely see legislation introduced?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I think it's really important, as the Prime Minister spoke about in the House of Commons on February 14, that the framework have both policy and legislation. I don't think there's any question that people want us to change these policies, which are terribly flawed—the comprehensive claims policy, the specific claims policy and the inherent right policy. We are working with our partners to move forward on those now. I think a lot of people feel that the sooner those changes are made, the sooner the impediments are out of their path to self-determination.

On the legislation piece, there are things that self-governing nations and the Land Claims Coalition have been asking for for a very long time—changes to the Interpretation Act, perhaps putting in place a dispute resolution framework. As I spoke about in my remarks, there is a need for treaty oversight...and what the UN declaration called treaty violation. How do we hold Canada to account when we sign an agreement to make sure that it takes place?

We will work on that kind of co-development and that kind of legislation at the same time. That tends to be with the self-determining nations, the Inuit as well as the Métis. For the first nations, the Indian Act bands, it's quite clear that National Chief Bellegarde and the bands within the AFN want the time to co-develop any legislation that would affect them.

But we are very clear that nothing will be imposed on anyone. The legislation, in its inception, was really to hold Canada to account in

the way that we end up being accountable to our partners for the agreements we have signed with them.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** There seem to be a number of views out there about what the framework is and what it's meant to do. I know you touched on a few aspects of it in your comments just now, but can you please explain to the committee what the framework is meant to accomplish, and just as important, what the framework will not do?

● (1600)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** The framework is the movement on what has been flawed policies: changing them and getting the problems removed from what was the comprehensive claims policy, the specific claims policy and the inherent right policy.

These are the things the Prime Minister talked about on February 14. From a denial of rights approach, where people had to claim their rights and then go to court to prove those rights, we are moving to an approach that means that those rights are recognized; they're section 35 rights recognized up front. Then we go to the table to discuss how communities want to exercise and implement those rights.

That's the new approach. It is not to define rights or to enforce any rights; I think there is some misinformation out there. It certainly isn't to describe what a nation is or what their governments would be. That will be up to nations to decide themselves.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** It's not just about moving toward self-determination as quickly as we possibly can to offload Canada's responsibilities. This is also working toward a certainty of accountability of the Canadian government to honour those agreements once they are in place.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** That's correct.

There are certain places where we are correcting previous agreements that were signed, which had things like cede and surrender, and extinguishment.

Two processes are going on for the Gwich'in Nation. One is their process to self-determination, but they are also modernizing their treaty to make sure that cede and surrender, and those real barriers to others wanting to embark on the path of self-determination, are being eliminated.

We are eliminating them in practice at the rights recognition tables. We need to have them removed in policy and/or legislation.

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** I'll end it there. I don't think there's enough time to get into the next question.

**The Chair:** Questioning now moves to MP Cathy McLeod.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Thank you, Minister. I always appreciate it when you come here.

This committee has been lonely and underutilized. We have been expecting significant commitments by your government in a host of areas. Just to name a few, child welfare legislation and the indigenous language act are nowhere to be seen.

You talked about the rights and recognition framework.

You promised. The Prime Minister stood up in Parliament and said, “it is our firm intention to have the framework introduced later this year and implemented before the next election.” That’s over-promise, under-delivery.

The other thing he promised to do.... Not only was there going to be talking with first nations and engaging, but also talking to civil society, industry and the business community. Has any work been done in that conversation?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Absolutely.

I think it’s important that we point out that pieces of legislation are coming forward in protecting and revitalizing child and family services and indigenous languages. In terms of other calls to action, there will be a change in the oath of citizenship. There is also the reconciliation council. This will address four of the calls to action. Pieces of legislation are coming forward.

As we go, I think there is no question that we have to do a better job with the 95% of Canadians who are not from an indigenous background. I’ve certainly been interested in your help as parliamentarians as to how we can make sure that all Canadians feel part of this. This was the criticism of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, that Canadians didn’t feel part of it or understand it.

We did a round table in Dryden on anti-racism with the Dryden Area Anti-Racism Network, DAARN.

• (1605)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Okay, thank you, Minister.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** We would love to be able to do more of that. Certainly Natural Resources Canada did their senior-level sessions with industry, and they will be doing even more.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** I appreciate that. Thank you.

The addition to reserve was buried in the budget. It was division 19. I asked that we look at that at this committee, and I was denied the opportunity to have any conversation around division 19.

Again, it was buried in the budget; we had no opportunity to look at this piece of legislation. The Senate did have some opportunities. Of course, what happened when it went to the Senate was that some of the major proponents—some of the people who would be most impacted—said they had no idea that was coming down the pipe.

Minister, when you have the people who are going to be most impacted by legislation that is buried in a budget bill saying, “I had no idea it was coming”, and chiefs across this country saying, “I got a letter, but I really didn’t know what it meant”, my question is this: Is this your idea of proper consultation before you introduce legislation in the House? Is it to bury it in a budget bill, not allow the indigenous affairs committee to look at it, and not even talk to the proponents of the legislation?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Cathy, even when I sat where you were sitting, or maybe I was down here as third party at this committee.... The problems and the slowness with which ATRs are accomplished are still an issue.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** We’re not questioning that it needed changing. What I am questioning is not having it in the budget,

contrary to your promises, burying it in a budget bill and not allowing proper scrutiny by us. From all appearances, having that proper scrutiny would have enabled us to see that indeed the proper consultation—which you committed to as a government—has not been done.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I think that most of the problems with the ATR have been administrative. Our government is too slow—and previous governments have been too slow—in actually making the changes.

These are quite often where a first nation has purchased a piece of property and it’s up to us to make that reserve land. It really hinders their economic development.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** I’m not questioning that, but when you have the Manitoba—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I will tell you that Dr. Philpott is working very hard on that. It falls within her responsibilities with the Indian Act bands and—

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Thank you, Minister. That leads me to the next question.

There was going to be legislation to separate the two departments. I understand there was an order in council that we have not been privy to in any form. Is it accurate that you still have to sign off on everything in the department as the senior minister, in terms of some of the measures that go ahead, because we haven’t had proper legislation tabled?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** As you know, we continue to consult on where things are best placed. Obviously, moving the first nations and Inuit health branch over to Dr. Philpott was a very significant piece of work. We needed to consult with the public servants. I think we’re well on our way—

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Are you still the senior minister?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** As you know, the orders in council are very clear as to who is responsible in each area.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Do you still have to sign?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** There are certain things—very few things—that we sign.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** You do have to, as the senior minister.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** In the same way, Minister LeBlanc and I are working together on things.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** In the supplementary estimates, there are significant additional dollars for the murdered and missing indigenous women inquiry. They asked for two years and \$50 million. You gave them six months and \$38 million. First of all, that doesn’t make logical sense.

I think it's also important to look at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which also had very difficult work to do. It took six years and spent \$60 million and did important work. They came out with an amazing report. An extra \$38 million makes no sense when they were asking for two and a half years and \$50 million, and they weren't given that extra year and a half.

Are you willing to actually share the details of how the first \$50 million has been used, and also the details of the next \$38 million?

**The Chair:** Sorry, time has run out on that block of questioning time.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** She could say “yes”.

**The Chair:** We'll move on to—

•(1610)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Are you sure you don't want the answer, Madam Chair?

I'm sure everybody is dying for that.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Yes.

**The Chair:** MP Rachel Blaney may want the answer.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Thank you so much for being here with us today, Minister.

It's very interesting to me that you're working on this framework, which your office is calling the recognition and implementation of indigenous rights framework. It seems to me that Mr. Saganash tabled a wonderful bill that was voted on in a positive manner in the House that really looked at a framework of rights for indigenous people across Canada using the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

I'm wondering about a couple of things. One, why aren't you using this, and how is it different? The other thing is this. When you speak of having a nation-to-nation relationship with each and every indigenous community—I want to be very clear—a lot of those communities are very small, and I'm wondering how you're supporting them with the capacity to face that kind of relationship when they're dealing with the Government of Canada?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I agree. I think that Romeo Saganash's bill has been very important to raise the profile of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the fact that Canada would be accountable to report on how we have embraced it and are using that. There are things that will be in the framework that won't be.... They need to be specific to Canada and our righting the wrongs of the past and taking our specific impediments to self-determination out of policies and, again, putting into legislation the kind of accountability framework that we need for Canada, to actually make sure we are accountable for the agreements we've signed.

There's excitement around the Anishinabek agreement on education, 23 Indian Act bands coming together on an education agreement. Shortly, all of the Anishinabek Nation will come together on governance. That's what we really mean in nation-to-nation, our two jobs of reconstituting the nations and letting nations come together in collectives of their own choosing, and then working with them toward a governance of their own choosing in their path to self-determination.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you so much, Minister.

Another thing that I see is some discussion around treaty land claims. I had one chief say to me, “I feel like I'm sitting at the table negotiating my people into poverty.” I think this is the experience of many communities, so I'm wondering if you could talk a little about what you're doing to change that, because it is something that needs to be done.

I also know that the self-governing treaty nations have been very clear and have come and talked to your ministry about having a substantive increase in resources so that they can really get to the tipping point in having their communities be more sustainable. Could you talk a little about where the resources for that are and when they're coming?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I must say that, two weeks ago, the meeting with the self-governing nations was one of the best meetings I've had, in that, working together with the government, they now have the fruits of their labour in two years of work on a collaborative fiscal arrangement that is predictable and adequate for them to be able to look after their people and their land. It was an extraordinarily positive meeting. I asked the grand chief if I could frame his remarks; they were so positive.

I think it will show people that we're not funding municipal governments; this is language and culture; it's the kind of funding arrangement that they have been asking for and that we will be able

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** When are the resources coming?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I think the agreement is there, and then each of the nations will be funded on this new model.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** In terms of the land claims, when you hear leaders saying that they're negotiating their people into poverty, how are you taking a leadership role in making sure that is not the case?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** As you say, there's the funding aspect, but the agreements that we're negotiating now quite often include land, like the Lubicon or some of the other major agreements we're signing. That's why we sometimes need the partnership of provinces and territories in terms of their Crown land and the kinds of conversations that will go on about resource revenue sharing.

With this new collaborative fiscal arrangement, we need the self-governing nations to feel that they're being adequately funded with the kind of resources they need, because it needs to be an incentive to have other nations want to do the hard work it takes to get to that place.

•(1615)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Minister, the Nuu-chah-nulth have been fighting since 2006 for their aboriginal fishing rights. I'm just curious. How many times are they required to go through court, and be successful again and again? When are their rights actually going to be recognized? When is that next step happening?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** As you know, we don't want to be in court. My job is to get out of court and try to settle these things as fairly as we can and in as timely a fashion as we can. We look forward to being able to settle that case as soon as possible.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** One of the things we've heard from numerous indigenous communities across Canada is that they're still waiting to find out about the indigenous housing strategy, the national one, and really specific issues. We've heard recently from people in the Arctic who are just hugely struggling, with 15-plus people living in a house, and the rampant illness of TB in the community and in the households.

I can think of a community in my riding, Kingcome, where the river is changing because of climate change. Every year they're building a little higher off the ground because the river is flooding into their community. They desperately need support, and they're just not seeing the support they need.

I wonder if you could talk about that infrastructure component of housing.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** The issue of infrastructure is huge. There was a huge lag. There was a huge deficit in terms of infrastructure, but you will be able to talk to Dr. Philpott also about her TB strategy. We know that we cannot get to the bottom of TB unless there's appropriate housing in the north. We look forward to the type of success it's going to take to close those gaps, particularly in housing.

**The Chair:** Questioning now moves to MP Yves Robillard.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Minister, I want to thank you for your excellent testimony, but especially for the very high quality of the translation of your speaking notes. They are written in impeccable French.

A key element of your mandate is to accelerate the unique approach to self-determination for First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. You have spoken in the past about the work under way across the country at recognition of rights and self-determination tables.

Could you let us know what progress has been made at these tables and explain why you believe this new approach is essential for accelerating the self-determination of indigenous peoples?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Thank you. It's a good question.

The topic of self-determination is close to my heart. There are 70 tables for 320 First Nations. There are also the Métis of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. These tables are absolutely unique. Each of them determines its priorities. The well-being of children and youth is a priority for one-third of the tables. There are also fisheries and education. In any case, we are still on the road to self-determination. I think this is a historic moment for First Nations communities. It is an opportunity to rebuild their nations, languages, governments, laws and legal practices. I am very optimistic about this.

• (1620)

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** Okay.

Funding for the Métis federation of Manitoba seems to be focused mainly on strengthening capacities, including closing the gaps and strengthening governance.

Why is this so important? In your opinion, what concrete examples of self-determination would result from these investments?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** These investments are intended to strengthen governance. They will give them the capacity to make their own laws. It is very important that programs exist to allow them to continue to focus on housing and on other services. Beyond that, these investments will really be used to establish their governance and their governments.

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** Thank you.

The 2018 budget provides \$101.5 million over five years to support capacity building for indigenous peoples. This funding is also available to support activities that will help them forge their own path and rebuild their nations. Investing in this capacity building is essential to accelerate self-determination.

Could you give us an update on this promised funding?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** This is very important. In the past, funding for measures to achieve self-determination came in the form of loans. Now, we are talking about investments in the discussion tables. I think it's a better approach than loans, which can be a barrier.

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We are moving on. We've run out of time.

[*Translation*]

I'm sorry.

[*English*]

We're moving on to the last round because we started a bit late. The questioning now moves to MP Kevin Waugh.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank you again for coming, Minister, along with Deputy Minister Watson and Alex Lakroni.

Welcome.

You may recall that about a year ago, on November 30, my question to start out that day was, and I quote:

Two departments, more staff, more money.... Give me an indication of how many more staff we have now, how much more money. Can you just give us a quick update? Obviously, you've split into two now, so that means you're hiring more. How much does that cost?

If you don't mind, a year ago, on November 30, 2017, you said:

One of the corrections I will make is that we are not splitting a department in two. We are dissolving a department, because all the great people who worked in our department had one burden on them: they worked for INAC. INAC is no longer to exist. We will build two new departments, bottom up, from following function, as we said, based on the needs.



Here we are today, and on the notice of meeting I see four, not two. How does this work? How much, really, is it costing Canadian taxpayers? A year ago, on November 30, you said two, and here we have four: Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Indian Affairs and Northern Development now, Minister of Indigenous Services, and now Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, with Mr. LeBlanc as the new lead.

Please, Minister, fill us in.

• (1625)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** At the moment, and from budget 2018, there has been no increase in what we've been carrying out.

I will say that we will need more money going forward because the appetite of our partners is so great that we have to be able to keep up with the pace, particularly in terms of getting on the path to self-determination. For us to be able to meet as regularly as people need, and to have the people to do this.... Eventually, they will be self-governing. As you know from what the Prime Minister said a year ago in August, the Department of Indigenous Services will no longer be necessary because those programs and services will be delivered by nations or by indigenous-led institutions.

As we're in this transition period at the moment, there is no increase, but I would be remiss not to say that I hope there will be increased resources so that we can do what it says in my mandate letter—accelerate the path to self-determination—and not be disappointing nations that want to get on that path.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** We were disappointed, and so was the Parliamentary Budget Officer this past summer, as they asked the two departments, which were unable to provide details as requested by their office, about their planned spending for infrastructure.

Are these details now available? We didn't get them in the summer when you were asked by the PBO.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Yes, I understand that they are available now.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Could you share them with us?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Yes.

I think that at that particular time, there were certain aspects of the infrastructure that were under tender, and it would have been inappropriate to release the details of those tenders until they were secured, in order for us to be able to make those decisions in good faith.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** How much did the departments plan to spend on indigenous and northern communities as part of phase 1 of the investing in Canada plan? Did you exceed that? What was the number we were looking at, and what have you spent so far?

It's kind of a three-part thing. What did you think you were going to spend in this investing in Canada plan? How much have you actually spent, and are you over?

**The Chair:** You have only a few seconds.

**Mr. Alex Lakroni (Chief Finances, Results and Delivery Officer, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** The infrastructure for CIRNAC, including the north, has three components, with housing, in three regions. The budget for

2016-17 was \$35 million. For 2017-18, it was \$45 million, and for this fiscal year, 2018-19, it is \$40 million, which is included in the supplementary estimates.

In addition to that, there is a component on clean growth and climate change. We have the details for that. I am more than happy to share them with you.

• (1630)

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We want to thank the minister and her team. *Meegwetch.*

We'll see you next time. *Au revoir.*

This meeting is now suspended. We're going to switch over.

• (1630)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1630)

**The Chair:** Welcome, Minister. We're happy to have you here.

The committee is hearing from you on the estimates, and we have some questions for you as well. I know the MPs are anxious to get started.

Please go ahead whenever you're ready.

**Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services):** Thank you, Madam Chair, for the welcome and the opportunity to be with you today.

I want to acknowledge that we are gathering for this meeting on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

It is a pleasure to meet again with the members of this committee. I would like to start by thanking you for the important work you are doing.

[*Translation*]

I appreciated your report on wildfires and fire safety on reserve, and I look forward to the results of your study on long-term care on reserve.

[*English*]

Last week, as you know, the Minister of Finance reminded us in his fall economic statement that the Government of Canada is committed to growing the middle class, which means creating an environment for indigenous peoples to access the opportunities that will enable them to be part of the thriving middle class.

It's no secret that those who have faced some of the most severe economic disadvantages in this country for a very long time are indigenous peoples. I want to assure committee members that we are hard at work to change this reality for indigenous peoples in Canada. We have made good progress in our work to close the socio-economic gaps for indigenous peoples.

I will be happy to answer any questions about that progress today.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Today I will be outlining my department's supplementary estimates A, funding which is crucial to address the broad socio-economic gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous people in Canada.

[English]

As you know, in January 2018, we identified five interconnected priority areas where Indigenous Services Canada plays an important role. These are child and family services, education, health outcomes, infrastructure and economic prosperity.

Although the appropriations in budget 2018 are reflected in the main estimates of the Treasury Board Secretariat, I would like to take a moment to outline some of the ways this funding is supporting these priorities.

We must address the humanitarian crisis of far too many indigenous children being taken into care. Budget 2018 provides more than \$1.4 billion in new funding over six years for first nations child and family services. We are currently working with indigenous partners as well as provinces and territories to reform child and family services, with a focus on prevention and with the idea of keeping children safe and families together. This includes exploring the co-development of options for federal child and family services legislation and supporting the exercise of jurisdiction over child and family services by indigenous communities.

We must also address the unacceptable health outcome gaps in first nations and Inuit communities across the country. To close these gaps, budget 2018 announced more than \$1.5 billion over five years, starting this fiscal year, and \$149 million per year, ongoing, for health programs. This funding will help, among other things, Inuit-specific approaches to prevent suicide and eradicate tuberculosis. It will also provide resources to address the opioid crisis in first nations communities.

In terms of first nations education, we know the graduation rates don't match those of non-indigenous Canadians, and we've made progress on a co-developed education policy reform that puts the emphasis on self-determination in education. We have also built and renovated schools and increased funding for post-secondary programs.

Another area of priority is addressing the infrastructure need. Both budget 2017 and budget 2018 are providing \$1.5 billion in funding towards distinctions-based housing strategies: a co-developed first nations housing strategy; an Inuit-led housing strategy for the Inuit regions of Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and Inuvialuit; and a Métis Nation housing strategy.

[Translation]

As well, Budget 2018 provides \$172.6 million over three years for clean drinking water on reserve. To date, we are on track to lift all long-term drinking water advisories by March 2021. We have now lifted 75, with 66 to go. This information and all updates on changes to drinking water advisories are available on our website.

[English]

I want to spend a few minutes on our fifth priority, that of economic prosperity. The Government of Canada is committed to building a new fiscal relationship with first nations communities, one that will result in sufficient, predictable and sustained funding. This relationship will be built on co-created solutions that support self-determination and accountability of first nations governments to their citizens.

To that end, the Government of Canada agrees with first nations who have told us that the First Nations Financial Transparency Act needs to be replaced with a respectful approach to the accountability relationship between Canada and first nations. That is why we are moving forward with first nations partners on the co-development of a mutual accountability framework, which was a recommendation from the new fiscal relationship report that was produced with the Assembly of First Nations and published in December 2017.

My department and the AFN recently established a joint committee on fiscal relations, which will provide advice on this important co-development work. The recommendations from the committee will be shared starting in spring 2019.

Let me now turn to the supplementary estimates (A).

• (1640)

[Translation]

Indigenous Services Canada requires immediate funds to continue delivering on our mandate of closing socio-economic gaps and advancing self-determination.

[English]

These estimates reflect a net increase of \$1.23 billion, which brings the total appropriations for 2018-19 for my department to \$10.9 billion. The largest portion of this increase, \$1.18 billion, is in vote 10, grants and contributions, primarily for water and other infrastructure, and for Jordan's principle. I will touch on three of these initiatives.

Funding of \$423 million would be provided for the first nations water and wastewater enhanced program and to monitor and test on-reserve drinking water. This funding is critical to build on our priority work in this area. Projects like the water treatment plant upgrades and repairs, and the training of operators through the circuit rider training program are supported by this funding.

Jordan's principle ensures that all first nations children have access to the health, social, and education products, supports, and services they need, when they need them. Funding of \$323 million will support care delivery under Jordan's principle. Since its inception, the reach of Jordan's principle has expanded to apply equally to all first nations children living on or off reserve. From July 2016 to September 2018, more than 165,000 requests for supports and services were approved under Jordan's principle.

To assist with the infrastructure crisis in first nations communities, we are requesting \$287 million in funding through these estimates. The funding would address critical infrastructure needs, including housing, and help communities plan in accordance with the construction cycle. With this funding, communities would be able to explore innovative and new approaches to meeting their housing and infrastructure needs.

These supplementary estimates (A), should they be approved by this committee, would make a direct difference in people's lives, in a manner that advances reconciliation.

I thank you for this opportunity, and I am pleased to take your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll start off with MP Mike Bossio.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you so much, Minister. It's always a treat to have you come to our committee. We do get to see you quite often, so we appreciate that.

What a phenomenal record you've had so far in this role. Your ability to get things done is really commendable.

Minister, I know you attended a meeting last week with youth from the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. I think you would agree that there is an amazing generation of young indigenous leadership that is emerging in Canada. In my own Mohawk territory, I'm so impressed. Every time I go to the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, I note that more and more youth are becoming more and more engaged at all levels, in all issues. Despite facing some challenging circumstances, these young people have proven themselves to be resilient and innovative.

Could you update the committee on how Choose Life has impacted the lives of youth in remote communities in northern Ontario? More broadly, could you speak to the impact that Jordan's principle, which you were just talking about, has had on first nations youth across the country?

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** Thank you very much for the question and for your generous words.

I would point out that any success we have managed to achieve has been a collective effort, working across government, across all parties and across first nations, Inuit and Métis leadership in this country. We're thankful that we're starting to see some really great progress.

The meeting last week with the youth from Nishnawbe Aski Nation was an extraordinary one. They were all so inspiring and enthusiastic, and bright and articulate. They met with the Prime

Minister, which of course they were delighted to be able to do, but they talked specifically about some of the things you mentioned.

One of them, which I really would be happy to share, is this program called "Choose Life". One of the great things about Choose Life is that it was actually designed by the youth of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation for the youth of NAN. It was a reaction to the very high rates of suicide. They said they know what their youth need to build hope and resilience, and could they plan a program that they believe will actually make a difference in young people's lives? They placed requests for funding through Jordan's principle, which we were able to support.

It has taken off in an incredible way. Now 47 of the 49 nations are using this. It's a program that has been incredibly successful in building hope. It includes a range of approaches, including spending time with elders, learning about traditional ways, learning about the history of their peoples and building that cultural resilience. There are also opportunities for outdoor education, where they go out on the land, on the rivers, and they learn about hunting and fishing. It really builds up what Minister Bennett always likes to call "a secure personal cultural identity", which is so valuable to people actually being able to have that strong self-esteem.

The youth themselves said it is making a difference and it is saving lives, and they pleaded with the Prime Minister that they be able to continue this program.

I could go on at some length about some of the other great things that Jordan's principle is doing. For example, in Manitoba, where the chair is from, an entirely different program has been designed, called "My Child, My Heart"—again, led by first nations for first nations, totally changing the lives and prospects of these young people.

• (1645)

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** I'm not surprised. When our committee was studying the youth suicide crisis a couple of years ago, we were in Sioux Lookout, and once again, it was absolutely remarkable how resilient the youth were, how creative they were, and as you said, innovative as well.

I understand that Choose Life is a program designed specifically to support the youth living in NAN communities. Can you elaborate on how this program has influenced the experience of first nations youth in northern Ontario? How might we expand upon it to better support them?

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** That's a great question. It's leading to many other possibilities, and it's also linking very nicely with another piece of some of the investments we're making around health transformation.

Colleagues might be very interested in knowing that just like the model we have seen working so well in British Columbia, the British Columbia First Nations Health Authority, there are opportunities now across the country to see health systems changed and improved, because they are delivered through an approach of self-determination.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is actually working and has brought in Ovide Mercredi, who may be known to many around the table, the former national chief, to lead the process of health transformation. They are looking at going beyond just Choose Life, looking at how they might ultimately be able to design, build and manage a health system, a health authority perhaps. It will go in the same spirit of saying, "We understand what our people need. We understand what quality improvement looks like in health care, and we want to be put in charge of that."

We are already seeing some very positive work in that direction.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Wonderful.

I have one minute left, so I'll try to get to this question quickly.

Looking beyond the scope of Jordan's principle for first nations youth, we know that Inuit youth face a different set of practical realities, based on remoteness. Could you share with the committee some of the barriers that Inuit children face in receiving care, and how the child first initiative will make the provision of health and social services easier?

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** Thank you for bringing that up.

We have seen the way Jordan's principle has brought access to health care and services to first nations young people and really had a profound impact on people's lives. We have heard from others, particularly Inuit, that they in fact face the same challenges, where they often have jurisdictional issues in terms of getting resources paid for. Sometimes there are particular things that they can't get support for. Some of these children are facing multiple handicaps, multiple disabilities that get in the way of their being able to enjoy quality of life.

They have asked us to work directly on an Inuit-specific approach that would be similar to Jordan's principle but designed by Inuit for Inuit, and they're calling it the "child first initiative".

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Fantastic.

Thank you so much, Minister.

**The Chair:** We're now moving to MP Arnold Viersen.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

One of the things I really appreciate about your mandate letter is the accountability aspect of it, its heavy emphasis on transparency and accountability. Over the summer, however, the PBO did a report talking about the federal departments and agencies responsible for \$14 billion being spent through phase 1 of the investing in Canada plan. One of the things they noted was that your department was unable to provide a plan or a breakdown of where that money was being spent. Is there a reason for that? Is that money available now?

• (1650)

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** Thank you for the welcome.

I'll ask my chief financial officer to respond to that.

**Mr. Paul Thoppil (Chief Finances, Results and Delivery Officer, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** The reason why the PBO did not get access at that point was

that the requisite Government of Canada internal approvals associated with that funding had not yet been secured. Therefore, we did not have the level of detail of information that the PBO had requested. After the approvals we sought were obtained, near the end of August, we were able to provide that to the PBO. It was a timing issue.

That being said, the minister has already referenced the fact that there is an infrastructure interactive map that does disclose to Canadians where infrastructure money is flowing, by first nation and by project class.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** How much money is in the investing in Canada plan for your department, and how much has been spent so far?

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** I'll ask Paul to give you specifics on that. First of all, hopefully you have our brochure, which, on page 2, contains a section on mapping the way forward in first nations communities. It points to the website, which I encourage you to look at. It's really interesting to see where infrastructure is being built and where these funds are being spent. It's quite impressive, and I welcome your feedback on it.

I'll ask if Paul wants to answer the specifics in terms of how much has been spent to date.

**Mr. Paul Thoppil:** In terms of start-off in commitments, a total of \$3.06 billion was committed to Indigenous Services Canada under phase 1 of the investing in Canada plan, divided as follows: \$1.83 billion over five years in water and wastewater infrastructure; \$416.6 million over two years for on-reserve housing; \$76.9 million over two years for cultural and recreational centres; \$319.9 million over five years for health-related infrastructure, including aboriginal head start; and finally, \$108.9 million for solid-waste management on reserve.

As of June 30, 2018, after two years of programming, more than \$2.25 billion of the overall infrastructure funding has been invested to support 3,385 infrastructure projects across the country. Of that amount, \$1.58 billion is part of the investing in Canada plan, phase 1.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Thank you.

One of the issues being raised from my constituents is around band elections. Two bands in particular, Tallcree and one in Wabasca, have had inconsistencies. I'm wondering how the new department, moving forward, is going to deal with band elections and how band members concerned about irregularities can address that.

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** I appreciate your question, and I want you to know that if you ever have specific things that come up on a day-to-day basis in the House, I am always happy to hear from members of any party. You can come speak to me directly if you have a question on a specific issue, or you can send me a note. That way you don't have to wait until I come to committee.

On this specific question, each band has some measure of discretion in terms of what their election processes look like according to the bylaws and regulations of the band. For the most part, elections run quite smoothly. From time to time, there are concerns or challenges or issues raised. When these concerns are raised, I immediately ask my department to reach out to see if there is anything we can do to help. More often than not, these issues are addressed within the bands themselves according to the rules they have put in place to govern themselves and their election processes.

I don't know if you want to add anything to that, Sony.

**Mr. Sony Perron (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** I just want to add that in order to move first nations out from under the Indian Act, provisions have been created for bands to set their own election rules and processes. Unfortunately, some, through the self-determination process, have taken this route. For those who have decided to stay under the Indian Act, the department, under the Indian Act, has the authority, under the statutory process, to investigate. This doesn't apply to those who have taken the responsibility over their election rules.

• (1655)

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Okay.

Minister, I've been hard on you for this in the past, and I'm going to go at it again.

With regard to the Financial Transparency Act, we are currently living in a weird situation where the rule of law is not being respected in Canada. The last time many of the first nations in my riding disclosed their financial documents was in 2014-15. Those are still up on their websites, but we haven't seen anything since.

Will you be repealing the Financial Transparency Act so that we don't live in this weird spot where we are living outside the law?

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** I know this is an issue that interests you. That's one of the reasons I wanted to refer to it in my opening remarks, to let you know that once again we are working on a new fiscal relationship, a relationship based on mutual accountability and respect, a nation-to-nation or a government-to-government type of relationship. Because of the issues you've raised in the past, I've had many conversations with Paul and with my other senior officials about this matter. I have asked them to specifically look at some of the questions you have put forward.

I think what you're getting at is whether Canadians can be confident that federal public funds are being expended accordingly. Is there accountability? I want to reassure this committee and all Canadians that, in fact, since long before the Fiscal Transparency Act came into place, this department has had robust processes to ensure accountability.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** But what about the bands that are—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, MP Viersen, but we've run out of time. I gave you a little bit extra.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We're now moving on to MP Rachel Blaney.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Thank you so much for being here.

If you don't mind, I'd like to take a moment just to make sure everyone knows that I'll be giving a notice of motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee devote four (4) sessions to study the forced sterilization of Indigenous women; that the Committee, as part of that study, invite the Indigenous Services Minister to appear for no less than one (1) hour to brief the Committee on the government's efforts to immediately end this practice; that the meeting with the Minister be televised; that the study be scheduled to begin no later than February 2019; and, that the Committee report its findings to the House.

Thank you so much.

Thank you for coming today, Minister. I certainly hope to see you here again to talk specifically about indigenous women and sterilization. I know from many people across Canada who have contacted me that they're very concerned and distressed that this was still happening as recently as 2017.

As a person who represents a more rural and remote riding in Canada, I have some questions for you. When we talk about children going into care, really having a leadership role is one of those challenges for the communities, as is the fact that those communities are so small. I've had a few of them come to talk to me because they've tried to come together and create a plan strategically over a large area, as you can imagine, to work together to make a strategy, but they're not getting any support to do that.

I'm just wondering if there are going to be any resources to address this issue, and address it in these really small, rural and remote communities.

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** I'm just wondering if you can clarify. Is the specific issue the communities are struggling to address around children in care?

Is this what you're asking about? This is different. You started off on forced sterilization, and then you changed.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** That's right. I moved on.

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** Okay. Absolutely.

We are working on trying to keep families together, to support family preservation, to support children in need. There are a number of ways we support communities in this area. I would be happy to provide, either directly or through my staff, further information about what can be done. If there's some specific...

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Are there any specific models for more rural and remote communities that have been successful and that you are looking at right now?

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** There are many models that have been successful. Jordan's principle funding is one of the ways.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** When you look at Jordan's principle, one of the challenges, of course, is that communities are dealing with a lot of challenges. I will also be talking about suicide here.

When you look at the smallness of some of the communities and the crises they're facing in terms of having their children taken into care, not having the resources, and sometimes kids going far away, to apply for something like Jordan's principle might be the very last thing they can make themselves do because they are trying to deal with the crisis.

What kind of supports are you giving to communities when they are in these kinds of crises to help them do things that are applying for other funding and resources?

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** I'll come to some of the other ones, but I'd just like to say, on Jordan's principle specifically, that it has a very strong support system built into it, with a 24-7 helpline. We provide support directly to leadership in communities to make sure they know how to access Jordan's principle funding.

If I may, I would also like to add details about the \$1.4 billion in new funding that we got access to, which was provided in budget 2018 specifically for the kinds of things you're talking about. I would need to get some details from you as to the names of the specific communities, because some of them work with a first nations child and family services agency, and we've made it very clear to those agencies that we will pay the actual cost that it takes to prevent the apprehension of children. So that's one of the mechanisms, to work through those agencies.

Where there isn't a first nations agency in the community, there is also funding for something called the community well-being initiative, where we provide support to the communities directly to find out what the needs are, again, to prevent the apprehension of children. I'd be very happy to have my team work directly with these communities and be able to find out other ways that we can support them. It's not a question of not having the resources to do so. We are continuing, as we did with Jordan's principle, now with the new funding for preventing apprehensions. There's work to be done to make sure everybody knows it's there and then, as you say, to really support the communities so they can actually get access to what's available.

• (1700)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** In the spring, the Auditor General's report talked about some serious concerns around the measurements of well-being not being very comprehensive. The indigenous communities, the first nations communities, were not engaged to measure properly. There was inaccurate reporting on education.

Could you tell us how that's being addressed, and on the issue of education specifically, when there will be more resources for education? I'm getting a lot of calls from indigenous communities within my riding that are still seeing the cap, and they need it gone. I'm wondering when that's actually going to happen.

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** As you know, we have made significant new investments in education. This was actually brought in initially under the leadership of Minister Bennett, with \$2.6 billion for education. We're continuing to see that funding roll out. There will be more rolled out next fiscal year, and we are also working at a region-by-region level to make sure we are not only achieving equity in terms of first nation on-reserve education funding, as compared to provincial funding, but actually what we are achieving is equity-plus. The communities will get the same as their provincial standard,

plus additional resources for culture and language training, for special education and for all-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds.

Again, as to the specifics of your particular community, there is outreach from the department to regions, and from regions into communities, so everyone knows how much more funding is coming next year. I suspect that you may be amongst the communities that are going to see further additional investments next year, and we're going to achieve that equity-plus.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** I look forward to that.

I have only one minute left. I just want to hear a bit more about the work that's being done on suicide. We heard recently that in northern Quebec there were 31 deaths this year alone due to suicide. Several communities are facing multiple suicides. I don't want to name them all because there are, frankly, too many. I think of one of my communities, where a young man recently hanged himself from the bridge in the community. This is something that continues to happen.

You talked about Jordan's principle, but how are you actually going out to the communities to support them through these crises? I can't even imagine a community losing 31 people by suicide in one year.

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** It's hard to do justice to that really important question in a short period of time, and I know that the committee has done an entire study on this, which was a fantastic study.

As it relates to northern Quebec, I would point you to the work that has been done through the national Inuit suicide prevention strategy, which is one of the best suicide prevention strategies I have ever seen. Nunavik is a land claim region in northern Quebec that is working alongside the provincial government to make sure that those youth get access to the services they need. That national Inuit strategy, I think, points to the levels: Yes, you need the emergency workers to go in, but you have to build in all of those other layers of addressing social determinants of health, etc., in order to eventually build hope and fairness for communities.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We need to move our questioning to MP Will Amos.

**Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.):** Thank you again, Minister, for joining us, and thank you to your officials.

I would second Mr. Bossio's comments. I really appreciate your leadership. I appreciate how you have tackled the splitting of the department. I think it's bearing fruit.

Specifically, I appreciate your comment about having lifted 75 long-term drinking water advisories, with 66 more to go. That's a major achievement. Certainly, there's a lot more work to do, so I wanted to give you the opportunity to speak a bit more about that work. In so doing, I wanted to highlight what I think many Canadians perceive to be an unfortunate reality, which is that while certain long-term drinking water advisories are lifted, others are added. There are some challenges around that.

Could you speak a bit more to that issue?

• (1705)

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** Thank you very much for raising that question.

You're absolutely right. This matter is of interest to all Canadians. Everywhere I go in the country, I am amazed by the fact that not just indigenous peoples, but non-indigenous Canadians are really seized with the need to make sure there's access to clean drinking water for all Canadians. We have made progress that I'm grateful for. It's good news to celebrate, but there is still more to do.

You're right, though. We discovered early on that, as long-term drinking water advisories were being lifted, new ones were being added. This is something I became aware of as I was starting in this portfolio. We had developed a robust plan for every one of those long-term drinking water advisories. However, initially, what we hadn't yet done was to ask who was at risk and which communities might develop a long-term drinking water advisory.

I'm happy to report to you that we have invested more, as well, in the area of prevention and extra attention for communities where we believe the system is vulnerable. We have also provided more resources for vulnerable systems to be able to pay attention before it gets too late. We are also working directly with communities to make sure they have the necessary construction equipment in place.

However, often it's more than just equipment. It's also about the operation and maintenance plan for the community. Do they have trained water operators? Are those water operators supported to be able to stay and be retained in the community over the long run? It actually requires a pretty comprehensive approach.

I won't say that there aren't setbacks from time to time, and sometimes the timelines get adjusted a bit. This is something we pay very close attention to. I have to give a shout-out to our officials, who have really put together a very strong team and made sure that we provide support to communities.

• (1710)

**Mr. William Amos:** Thank you, Minister.

As a follow-up, I met recently with a constituent, Emma Lui, who is a long-time water campaigner for the Council of Canadians.

There was one issue she raised, which I thought merits your consideration. Her comment was that there are a number of short-term drinking water advisories that tend to get repeated, so they're not necessarily considered long-term situations. However, her perspective was that repeated short-term advisories ought to be contemplated more as a long-term situation. Do you have any thoughts or a response on that?

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** Thank you for your question.

It's probably a little difficult to answer in a hypothetical situation, because one thing I have learned is that the circumstances of every community are quite unique. Yes, there are some places that have multiple short-term advisories, but you really need to dig into what the reality is and what's behind that.

In Stouffville, there are a lot of potholes on the road where we live. I don't know if this has ever happened to you, but from time to time, they'll be doing road work and I'll get a little notice on my doorstep that says not to consume our water for the next 48 hours because they're working on the water mains. Those kinds of things happen all over the country. There are short-term drinking water advisories that come and go. We had a recent situation where a mudslide contaminated the groundwater in a community and we had to put a short-term precautionary advisory on.

Even when all long-term drinking water advisories are lifted, there will continue to be short-term advisories. That's the nature of public health and water systems.

You're absolutely right, though, that if we see that a single community is getting a lot of those, that's a sign to the department to ask what's going on and to find out whether that system is going to break down. Paul and his team are making sure that we have resources for those vulnerable systems and they look at whether we should maybe start to develop a plan for some upgrades to the system or sometimes even a brand new system.

**Mr. William Amos:** Thank you.

Before my time is up, Minister, I want to make a positive statement about a particular issue that is being handled by your department in my riding. I think that constituents in my riding would want you to know this and would want this to be on the public record.

Your department has been having discussions with the community of Rapid Lake for a number of months with a view to ending the third party management that has been in place for many years there. I understand those discussions have reached a successful conclusion. This opens the door to some really important work that goes to the infrastructure conversation we're having today for the budget.

It is of the utmost importance to our whole riding, and not just the community of Rapid Lake, that the community receive the housing investments and the education and school investments it needs, and that the diesel power source that it has been relying on for many years, which is utterly unreliable, be replaced and their connection to the hydro system be achieved.

I deliver thanks to your department for working on it, and through you, to your department officials. Please stay on top of it, because that issue is of primary concern to the people of Pontiac.

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** Good. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The questioning now moves to MP Cathy McLeod.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Unless there's unanimous to consent to double my time, I'll have to halve it with Mr. Waugh, so cut me off at two and a half minutes. Thank you.

Thank you, Minister.

I'm going to give one example, but I really want to say that it represents a lot of examples. About a month ago, I walked in the evening with the Bear Clan Patrol, and I saw them deal with a sexual assault where they very compassionately had an escort take the woman to hospital. I saw them dealing with domestic abuse. I saw people saying, "Thank you so much for being there."

These are large groups of volunteers who are going out in the frigid weather of Winnipeg and doing absolutely incredible work. They got \$100,000 in 2016-17, and in an email to them for 2017-18, they were told, "[T]here was an overwhelming demand for funding to address urban Indigenous issues. As a result, Indigenous Services Canada...is not currently issuing a new call for proposals while we work with partners...", blah, blah, blah. Basically, we're consulting, and that \$100,000 you got last year is not going to be available this year.

I just find that incredible. I make a point, when I'm in cities across this country, to see what our urban aboriginal organizations are doing. To be frank, I think they're the forgotten cousins.

Let's talk about this. How can your department, when these guys are going out and they're picking up needles and they're looking for people who are frozen behind garbage dumps...? There are hundreds of them. They're told, "There's no \$100,000 for you to maybe have someone who's going to coordinate this or put some gas in your trucks."

We're spending almost \$100 million on an inquiry and, in the meantime, we have this group of grassroots, compassionate people doing this. Tell me how your department can just say, "So sorry, we're consulting."

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** Thank you for the question and for drawing attention to the really great work the Bear Clan is doing. I am aware of their really important work. It is one of many outstanding organizations across the country that work with indigenous peoples in urban settings.

I heartily agree with you that there is more that needs to be done to support these fantastic organizations. You may be well aware of the fact that, historically, federal governments, including the past one, have not had major investments to support programming for indigenous peoples in urban settings. It's a reality.

I am happy to say that we continue to increase the funding for urban programs for indigenous peoples, and that the funding has been significant and has supported a large number of programs across the country, including the work of many friendship centres that do great work.

There is a need for more; I acknowledge that. As it relates to Bear Clan, I'm happy to have heard, as you have heard, that they have found a solution in the short term with money that has come from the provincial government, which I think is fantastic.

I think all orders of government have a responsibility to address the needs of indigenous peoples in urban settings, and this is a good thing when we're working together with other orders of government. We are looking for ways to do more in the future, and I'd be happy to hear your suggestions.

● (1715)

**The Chair:** MP Waugh, go ahead.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Thank you for coming, Minister.

On page 6, you talk about education: the Manitoba schools initiative, the Lake Winnipeg schools bundle and the northern Ontario schools bundle. Are these one-offs, or do we actually have a national plan that we can celebrate? I see these three. I've talked to several others in this country, and they're envious of these three, to be honest with you. They want to know if you have a national plan.

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** Thank you for the question.

There's good news and there's bad news. The bad news is that there is a lot of lost time that we are making up for in terms of investments for education on reserve. I'm happy to say that we have made very significant investments and that we do in fact have a planning approach.

Whether it be around educational infrastructure or health care infrastructure, the capital needs across the country on reserve are significant. These three that are highlighted here are some of the areas that have some of the most significant needs.

I was delighted to be in Manitoba just a couple of weeks ago to celebrate with the chiefs of the four communities that are part of the Manitoba schools initiative. There is \$248 million in funding. That's going to see new schools in each of those communities, plus an upgraded school. This means that there will be K-to-12 education in those communities. They will not have to send their kids far away. This is a huge celebration that I hope all Canadians are thrilled about.

Yes, there's more to do. We look forward to further announcements on some of these other bundles that are to come. There is going to be more work to do after that. This is an area that unfortunately has not had attention. I hope that all parties will support further investments and call for more investments.

This is an incredibly important thing—to build schools so that every child in this country has access to a good education, with good teachers. To be able to see that these schools are built, there will be more announcements in the months to come.

**The Chair:** We are now moving to MP Yves Robillard, but for a short portion because we have motions to pass.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** Thank you, Madam Chair.



Madam Minister, thank you for your excellent testimony.

I know you were in Manitoba recently to celebrate the signing of a contract to build four schools, which will allow young people to complete their high school education in their region.

Madam Minister, could you briefly discuss your department's efforts to improve the education of indigenous youth from kindergarten to grade 12?

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** Thank you for your question.

Two weeks ago, we made an extraordinary announcement in Manitoba about new schools. Four communities will be granted \$248 million for the construction of four schools and the renovation of one other. This amount also includes support for the teachers.

[English]

I'll just jump to English, if you can forgive me.

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** That's not a problem.

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** I didn't get a chance to give all the details in my previous answer, so I'm happy to report that we were also able to respond to some of the requests around what they call "teacherages", which may be a term that people aren't familiar with. It's housing for teachers to live in.

What I hear from time to time across the country is that communities can't recruit teachers to these remote communities because there's no place for teachers to live. Some of the communities said that it was part of what they really needed: not only a new school, but a place for teachers to live. We were able to respond to that part of the request as well.

We believe that not only will this build a great place for students to go to school, designed in a way that is respectful and culturally appropriate, but it will also attract teachers who will want to stay in those communities. I cannot tell you how happy those chiefs were. Dan can attest to their literal tears of joy and happiness in realizing what this means to their communities.

**Mr. Yves Robillard:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Obviously, we have a lot of questions and interest, but unfortunately we've run out of time.

On behalf of all members of the committee, let me say that we really appreciate your taking the time to come out and answer our questions.

*Merci beaucoup. Meegwetch.*

● (1720)

**Hon. Jane Philpott:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We're going to suspend, because we have to go through a number of votes on estimates. We'll let the minister and staff leave and then get on with business.

● (1720)

(Pause)

● (1720)

**The Chair:** All right. Let's get going.

We have a number of votes.

DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Vote 1a—Operating expenditures.....\$301,966,236

Vote 5a—Capital expenditures.....\$9,877,924

Vote 10a—Grants and contributions.....\$1,374,412,013

(Votes 1a, 5a and 10a agreed to on division)

DEPARTMENT OF INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Vote 1a—Operating expenditures.....\$86,242,640

Vote 5a—Capital expenditures.....\$150,000

Vote 10a—Grants and contributions.....\$1,137,226,499

(Votes 1a, 5a and 10a agreed to on division)

**The Chair:** Shall I report the supplementary estimates (A), 2018-19 to the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Oh, harmony.

We have one more issue, just a little notice for our next report. I want to remind members to put in their witnesses. It's going to be at capacity.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** We have some motions on the table.

**The Chair:** Shall we discuss those motions at the next meeting?

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** I was going to say, Madam Chair, that it would be prudent of us to have a conversation around next steps. We have a number of motions and, to be frank, I don't recall prioritizing the one you are talking about, so it would be good to have a general discussion.

**The Chair:** We will put that on the agenda so we have committee business.

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.





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