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June 29, 2022

Ms. Shannon Phillips, MLA
Chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Legislative Assembly of Alberta
3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 1E7

Delivered via email to: PACcommittee.Admin@assembly.ab.ca

Dear Ms. Phillips:

Thank you for your invitation to appear before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on May 3, 2022.

Attached is Indigenous Relations' written responses to 10 questions I committed to provide to Committee Members during the meeting.

Please contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,


Donavon Young
Deputy Minister

Attachment: Indigenous Relations' Public Accounts Written Responses

cc: Aaron Roth (aaron.roth@assembly.ab.ca)
Committee Clerk, Public Accounts Committee

Indigenous Relations' Public Accounts Written Responses

Question 1 (PA 730-731): For the Litigation Fund, please provide a list of criteria for screening applications.

Response

- Eligible groups, coalitions, privately funded societies, or alliances must include representatives from Alberta-based Indigenous peoples, businesses, communities and/or groups.
- Eligible proposals must support litigation or legal intervention in areas that demonstrate support for the efficient, safe, orderly and responsible development of Alberta's natural resources and/or increased market access for Alberta's resources.
- Applicants need to show how their projects improve Alberta's interests by:
 - supporting Indigenous people in Alberta as they voice their interest in responsible resource development that benefits their communities and increases their participation in Alberta's economy;
 - supporting efficient, safe, orderly and responsible development of Alberta's natural resources and increased market access for our natural resources; and
 - creating fair and effective policies, legislation and market systems that support development and export of Alberta's natural resources.
- Eligible proposals must apply for one of the following:
 - litigation or legal intervention – joining or participating in litigation or regulatory processes; or
 - seed funding to support the development of research to evaluate potential court challenges.
- The litigation or legal intervention supports the efficient, safe, orderly and responsible development of Alberta's natural resources or increased market access for Alberta's resources.
- Applicants must explain how the group has a unique perspective to add that is in Alberta's interests.
- Oil, oil sands, natural gas and pipeline proposals will be a priority. All natural resource proposals, including forestry, are eligible.

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Question 2 (PA 732): Please make available the code of conduct for the AIOC Board.

Response

- The AIOC Board's code of conduct can be found <https://www.theaioc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/AIOC-Code-of-Conduct-V1-0-WEB-VERSION.pdf>

Question 3 (PA 734): Any notes or summary from lead department that interact with Federal Government on on-reserve services for persons with disabilities?

Response

- The Ministers of Community and Social Services (CSS) and Indigenous Relations (IR) share responsibility for this platform commitment.
- The Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program is prepared to provide services on-reserve if the federal government agrees to reimburse Alberta per the terms of the existing *Arrangement for the Funding and Administration of Social Services (ARA)* agreement.
- In 2020-21, IR and CSS sought federal reimbursement for PDD services provided to First Nations individuals on-reserve.
- Specifically, IR worked closely with CSS to escalate concerns around the ARA process and to seek reimbursement for PDD services on-reserve with the federal government.
- Actions to support this initiative continued into 2021-22.

Question 4 (PA 734): Provide a list of what Indigenous Relations is advocating for as it relates to families with children with disabilities on-reserve?

Response

- IR advocates with its federal and cross-ministry partners to ensure:
 - barriers and gaps in services are identified and addressed within the provincial Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) program; and
 - that all First Nations children living in Canada can access the products, services and supports they need, when they need them. One way is through supporting Jordan's Principle.

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Question 5 (PA 734-735): Any information from Community and Social Services on progress on removing barriers to providing disability supports for adults and for children on-reserve?

Response

- In 2020-21, IR provided assistance to Children's Services (CS) and CSS on an engagement plan for Indigenous families who have children living with disabilities to assist in identification of gaps, or barriers, of the provincial Family Support for Children with Disabilities program.
- Please note that in 2020-21, this was an emergent priority for IR and CSS. In March 2020, CSS advised the federal government of their intent to seek reimbursement for services and to further reduce barriers for disability supports for adults and children on-reserve.
- IR and CSS have made progress in supporting the removal of barriers for adults and children with disabilities on-reserve in more recent fiscal years, that are out of the scope of this request.

Question 6 (PA 737): Any summary report, for February 12, 2020 meeting, and other meetings related to children and family intervention services on and off-reserve?

Response

- This is an important initiative for Indigenous Relations and, while there is no summary report available, within the 2020-21 fiscal year IR:
 - provided assistance to CS and CSS on an engagement plan for Indigenous families who have children living with disabilities to assist in identification of gaps or barriers of the FSCD program;
 - participated in a cross-ministry working group (last meeting November 25, 2020); and
 - participated in ADM Steering Committee meetings.

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Question 7 (PA 739): Provide a list of specific ministries that First Nations Women's Economic Security Council and Métis Women's Economic Security Council provided advice to.

Response

- In 2020-2021, the First Nations and Métis Women's Councils on Economic Security provide advice and recommendations through the Honourable Rick Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations, to the following Government of Alberta departments in relation to the impacts of COVID-19 on Indigenous women, families and their communities:
 - Advanced Education,
 - Children's Services,
 - Community and Social Services,
 - Education,
 - Health,
 - Justice and Solicitor General, and
 - Labour and Immigration.
- Throughout the relevant fiscal year, both Councils were represented on the Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which was in the midst of examining the National Inquiry's final report and Calls for Justice in an Alberta context to develop advice and recommendations to government on actions to address violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.
- In addition, the First Nations Women's Council presented to the Human Trafficking Task Force.
- The Métis Women's Council also met with and provided advice to Community and Social Services and the Alberta Energy Regulator.

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Question 8 (PA 739): Provide performance indicators Indigenous Relations use to evaluate progress made for outcome 3 or objective 3.4.

Response

- Thank you for the question. We will take this under consideration for future Council recommendations.

Question 9 (PA 741): During 2020-21 there was a change in the timing of FNDF grant payments from quarterly to monthly. Can you describe what type of projects does this fund support and why was this change necessary, and how it benefited Indigenous Peoples?

Response

- The First Nations Development Fund (FNDF) provides an opportunity for the Government of Alberta and the participant First Nations to work together to address the economic, social and community development needs of First Nations.
- The FNDF is funded through revenue from government-owned slot machines at the five First Nations Host Casinos.
- Slot machine revenue supports hundreds of economic, social, and community development projects, which has a direct, positive effect on thousands of First Nations people living on reserve in Alberta.
- Examples of projects funded in 2020-21 include:
 - \$2,449,301 for Tsuut'ina Nation's fire department;
 - \$104,215 for Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation's residential housing 3 5-plex units project;
 - \$95,584 for Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation's John Deere compact track loader; and
 - \$132,000 for Kehewin Cree Nation's community assistance program.
- First Nations casinos, like other gaming centres in Alberta, were closed or operated at reduced capacity for much of the 2020-21 fiscal year, to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. This resulted in decreased slot machine revenue.
- In 2020-21, total slot machine revenue from the five on-reserve First Nations casinos was \$63 million, a reduction of \$40 million from the previous year.
- Indigenous Relations worked closely with Host First Nation casinos to discuss COVID-19 restrictions and implement guidelines so casinos could operate safely.

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- As a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on First Nation communities, FNDF compliance reviews were limited in order to reduce the burden on First Nations staff as they responded to the pandemic.
- In 2020-21, FNDF conducted one compliance review of Whitefish (Goodfish) First Nation. The compliance review is based on the First Nations risk assessment. There were no findings of non-compliance in the review.
- In 2020-2021 FNDF changed the timing of grant payments from quarterly to monthly. This change was done in response to COVID-19 financial pressures that First Nations faced as well as to assist them with regular cash flows. It benefitted First Nation communities by removing some of the financial barriers they faced in implementing their projects and allowing them to start them sooner.

Question 10 (PA 741): Can the department highlight some of the main red tape reduction initiatives Indigenous Relations undertook during 2020 – 2021? How has cutting red tape directly benefited indigenous peoples? Could you provide some details on the Aboriginal Consultation Office (ACO) Digital Service?

Response

- Some of the main red tape reduction initiatives include:

The *Metis Settlement Act* amendments

- Amended the 30-year-old *Metis Settlements Act* to improve community sustainability and autonomy by reducing the cost and size of governance, reducing the role of the Minister, and increasing Metis Settlement Councils' accountability to their members.
- The bill received Royal Proclamation on June 17, 2021.

Multi-Year Funding Agreement with the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW)

- Provides stable core funding that reduces administrative burden and increases capacity for the delivery of programs and services for Indigenous women.
- The funding agreement was changed from an annual to a five-year cycle.
- The Institute can do more planning to provide Indigenous women with programs that offer support and empowerment, and work with the Government of Alberta to ensure that Indigenous women's perspectives are part of government's work in future years.

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Streamlined approval process for First Nation Development Fund (FNDF) applications

- Streamlined the FNDF application approval processes that allow for quicker reviews and approvals of FNDF applications, and creating more opportunities for approved First Nations to expedite their FNDF grant-funded projects; and
- Changed the timing of FNDF grant payments from quarterly to monthly, providing First Nations with quicker access that enables them to implement FNDF grant funded projects in a timelier manner.

Streamlined the Indigenous Consultation Capacity Program (ICCP) contribution agreement

- Changed from a one-year to three-year term agreement to provide Indigenous communities the ability to focus on long-term capital planning.
- Eliminated all non-crucial ICCP reporting requirements including the Band Council Resolution, consultation surveys and interim and final training to allow Indigenous communities to focus fully on participating in the consultation process.

Consultation guide for Indigenous communities

- The ACO is developing a consultation guide for First Nations, Metis Settlements, and credibly asserted Métis communities. The purpose of this guide is to provide information on Alberta's consultation and regulatory processes that is specific to the needs of Indigenous communities.
- The Guide intends to provide information on roles and responsibilities of regulators in relation to ACO as well as consultation-related information in one easily accessible document.
- Better and more specific information will help ensure Indigenous communities are well positioned when consultation is required.
- Indigenous Relations anticipates releasing the guide in summer 2022.

Red Tape Reduction

- The government continues to respect Aboriginal rights and traditional uses while cutting red tape, outdated regulations and redundant processes. This is about getting rid of an administrative burden and replacing it with initiatives that stimulate economic growth and job creation for Indigenous communities, others in Alberta and businesses.
- IR undertook several red tape reduction projects that directly benefitted Indigenous peoples. Some examples include:

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- In collaboration with Treasury Board and Finance, eliminated the Alberta Indian Tax Exemption (AITE) card.
- As noted above:
- Amendments to the *Metis Settlements Act* that provide greater financial and governance sustainability for these Métis communities
- Extended the funding agreement with the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women to a five-year cycle instead of an annual grant.
- Streamlined approval process for FNDF applications, which created opportunities for approved First Nations to expedite their grant-funded projects.
- Extended the ICCP contribution agreement from one to three years to give Indigenous communities the ability to focus on long-term planning.

Aboriginal Consultation Office (ACO) new Digital Service

- The ACO Digital Service is a new online system that provides enhanced service delivery to industry, Indigenous communities and ministries involved in Alberta's Indigenous consultation process.
- It is a great example of how Alberta is cutting red tape, so businesses can do what they do best – innovate, grow and create jobs for hardworking people in Alberta.
- It is aimed at making consultation more efficient, effective, transparent, and user-friendly for Indigenous communities, Industry and government staff through digital delivery.
- It is the first government tool/service that provides Indigenous communities and Industry with direct access to their consultation files. This helps them keep abreast of their consultation files more easily than ever, significantly improving transparency and enhancing meaningful consultation.
- It is available online at <https://aco.alberta.ca/home>.
- Work is underway to build further functionality that will allow application submission, review, and processing all through the ACO Digital Service, further reducing the administrative burden for all users.