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• (1545)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Marc Garneau (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

[Translation]

Welcome to meeting No. 6 of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

[English]

Before we get started with our panel of witnesses, I want to apologize for our being late. We had to vote.

We're continuing to meet to study barriers to indigenous economic development. Today we have two panels. On the first panel, we have Darrell Beaulieu, CEO of Denendeh Investments Incorporated; Chris Googoo, CEO of Ulnooweg Development Group Inc.; and Grand Chief Jerry Daniels of the Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.

[Translation]

In an hour, we will welcome our second panel of witnesses.

[English]

We welcome Thomas Benjoe, president and CEO of File Hills Qu'Appelle Developments; Andy Moorhouse, vice-president of economic development from the Makivik Corporation; and Carlana Lindeman, education program director for the Martin Family Initiative.

[Translation]

You all know the health measures to be taken during our meeting. I hope that you will all follow them.

[English]

We all—as you know by now; I don't have to repeat it—have a certain process for going through these meetings. Please raise your hand if you want to speak, and wait until I acknowledge you.

Madame Clerk, I understood this morning that we would not have Inuktitut translation today. Is that correct, or has that been rectified?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Vanessa Davies): No, that's correct. We don't have Inuktitut translation this week.

The Chair: Okay. We have English and French. You may use whichever one you wish. If there is a problem, please let me know as quickly as possible so we can address it.

Each organization will begin with a five-minute statement, and then we'll get into the first period of questions, which will be one six-minute question period for each of the parties. We'll then get into the second round.

Without further ado, I would like to invite Monsieur Darrell Beaulieu of Denendeh Investments Incorporated to take the floor. You have five minutes, sir.

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu (Chief Executive Officer, Denendeh Investments Incorporated): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the standing committee for inviting me to make a presentation.

I'm speaking to you today as the president and CEO of Denendeh Investments Incorporated, which is the business arm of the 27 first nations of the NWT, and as the spokesman for the NWT indigenous leaders economic coalition, which represents all the indigenous people in the NWT—Dene, Inuvialuit and Métis—who have come together to improve the economic conditions in our communities, looking at the overall well-being of the NWT.

I've been involved in economic development in the NWT for over 30 years, and I have seen first-hand the barriers to indigenous economic development. I would like to take this opportunity to provide some possible solutions.

Indigenous corporations and businesses in the NWT want to be major players in resource and infrastructure development. Existing funding programs have not been effective in stimulating the economic needs of the north. To make a difference and to be effective, capital for equity to leverage financing must be readily accessible and managed by existing indigenous economic institutions based in the north, thus creating partnerships with governments, indigenous business and private equity.

You need a stable, recurring revenue stream, accessible capital and a cash-flow mechanism for investment in indigenous economic development in the north rather than the existing proposal-based funding models that are not dependable and clearly do not provide for capacity and stability to take advantage of opportunities. Our experience is that opportunities that do come are mostly swept up by southern-based businesses that already have ready capital and take induced benefits and profits out of the territory, thus leaving a recurring vacuum in their wake.

Indigenous people in the NWT receive less funding than our southern counterparts for economic development, because our funding goes through CanNor—that's the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency—and the Government of Northwest Territories. Furthermore, the north is not always eligible for funding that is available through national indigenous organizations.

Most federal and territorial programs will not fund salaries but will provide funding to hire consultants and contractors. This does not contribute to local capacity; it results in community economic leakage.

The federal transfer payments account for about 85% of total Government of Northwest Territories revenues. To access this territorial funding for economic development, indigenous governments, their corporations and businesses must apply to the GNWT. Their projects and initiatives may not be supported if they do not fall under the GNWT mandate, even though they reflect indigenous priorities.

Currently the NWT experiences a critical lack of energy, communications and transportation infrastructure. This contributes to the high cost of living. Without this strategic, wealth-generating infrastructure, valuable northern resources are stranded.

Indigenous roles in the northern economy are critical in terms of benefits to the north, investor confidence, regulatory stability and implementation of the recommendations of the National Indigenous Economic Development Board, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the current economic reconciliation process discussions.

• (1550)

The development of corridors for the national, provincial and territorial economies should be indigenous-driven, -developed and -designed. Routes should be selected, owned, operated and maintained by indigenous people in partnership with governments and industry.

In October 2021, the NWT business and political leaders representing the Dene, Métis and Inuvialuit directed a letter on their behalf be sent to Prime Minister Trudeau requesting \$100 million for the coalition. He responded very swiftly, directing his ministers to work with us. Unfortunately, to date, there's been no contact.

In terms of some of the recommendations I'd like to go over, barriers to indigenous economic development—

The Chair: Would you wrap it up, Mr. Beaulieu, please.

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu: Okay, thank you.

We hope to end the economic inequities facing indigenous communities to achieve true economic reconciliation and to become major drivers in the NWT economy. There's a requirement for adequate resources to develop land use, economic and mineral policies to facilitate the free, prior and informed consent to help address the regulatory roadblocks.

We need to empower indigenous governments and businesses to lead northern infrastructure and resource development by providing adequate funding to the NWT indigenous coalition. The key is go-

ing to be investments in significant projects in the NWT required to build and create a sustainable economy.

Lastly, I'd like to reinforce the expedition to changes to the First Nations Fiscal Management Act and to expand First Nations Finance Authority services directly to the corporations and organizations that belong to indigenous governments, as the FNFA does finance equity.

I'd like to thank you for that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Beaulieu.

The second speaker is Grand Chief Jerry Daniels.

Chief, you have five minutes.

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels (Chairman, Southern Chiefs' Economic Development Corporation, Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.): [*Witness spoke in Ojibwa as follows:*]

Boozhoo dinwemaaninwog, miigwetch gizhe manido nongom, Ogema Makwa ndo azhinkaas. Gino mashkode ndo onjibaa, Binesii ndodem, nimoshomis gewiin agaa shkoseg agii abi daa ngokom gewiin kina gwaya agii naagidowenimaan.

[*Ojibwa text translated as follows:*]

Greetings, my relatives. Thank you, God, for today. My name is Ogema Makwa. I am from Long Plain. My clan is Thunderbird. My grandfather too came from the reserve, and my grandmother took care of everyone.

[*English*]

Thank you for the invitation to appear as a panellist to present the following opening statement regarding the very important and long-standing issue of barriers to economic development.

My name is Jerry Daniels. I'm the chairman of the Southern Chiefs' Economic Development Corporation, and the grand chief of the Southern Chiefs' Organization in southern Manitoba. We represent 34 first nations as the Southern Chiefs' Organization, totalling approximately 81,000 citizens and about 10% of the total first nations population in all of Canada. The Southern Chiefs' Economic Development Corporation was launched in 2018 with the long-term purpose to help enhance and strengthen the economic base of the 34 first nations that make up the membership of the Southern Chiefs' Organization. The Southern Chiefs' Organization was founded in 1999 and, as I said, represents 34 first nations from Anishinabe and Dakota backgrounds.

The Southern Chiefs' Economic Development Corporation, SCEDC for short, represents an opportunity for us to participate as full, equal partners in private enterprise across Manitoba. It is an opportunity to help us move from poverty to prosperity and it is an integral component of building wealth in the first nations communities of southern Manitoba.

My message is clear: the south needs to be open for business, and we are absolutely committed to that. The creation of the SCEDC is an important step in taking back economic sovereignty for our communities. The eagle was chosen as the logo for SCEDC to reflect the importance of a strong economy as a messenger of hope and prosperity. The philosophy of SCEDC is that we are stronger and better together, meaning that we value all elements of good business and fair partnerships, because when we work together, we can build a stronger economy for all our peoples.

Currently, indigenous businesses, communities and people in Manitoba contribute more than \$9.3 billion annually to the Manitoba economy. Please see the report “Indigenous Contributions to the Manitoba Economy” that was published in January 2019. This report describes the importance of the indigenous community for business, government and household spending in the Manitoba economy. Despite this, the first nations people who make up the vast majority of the indigenous population in Manitoba are the least involved in business and industry participation that creates wealth for its citizens.

We believe that the long-term path to economic reconciliation will be focused on the components of building wealth. One of the key components is active and meaningful participation in the economy through sustainable and viable business development. We can no longer be shut out of the economic opportunities that this country's wealth has been built on, nor can we settle for less than full, long-term and equal partnership in those current and future business opportunities all around us. They are important and vital. If we don't build first nations wealth, very little will improve and the gaps in the standard of living will continue to be very unacceptable for our population.

Regarding the gaps, several years ago, the Department of Indian Affairs did a nationwide human development index study. The findings were clear and not surprising. The HDI for first nations in Canada was the lowest of any identifiable group in the entire country, and the first nations in Manitoba had an HDI among the lowest of any other first nations in Canada. Unfortunately, very little has been done to improve this situation over the last 15 to 20 years.

In order to encourage first nations wealth building, thus significantly reducing the inherent and long-term gaps in Canadian society, I will briefly discuss a few of the key components of the barriers required to be addressed.

The first is poverty and lack of equity. While these two are not necessarily the same, they do tend to go hand in hand. The cycle of poverty must be broken through education, training, business opportunities and proper housing. These are some of the key components that must change.

While there have been very slow increases in education to close the gaps, they still exist. We need to help the reserve schools to become among the best funded and resourced, with the best teachers available. We also need to address the housing shortages. Long-term business opportunities in industry also need to be supported. Government and first nations can creatively address these shortages as quickly as possible. Long-term loan guarantees to first nations and first nations businesses for capital projects, including housing, may help this crisis.

• (1555)

In short, the basic standards that are accepted for the majority of Canadians must be the minimum standard for first nations. If we collectively want to address the core issues and close the gaps, basic infrastructure like health care, roads, airports and water all fall into this category, along with housing shortages.

The Chair: Chief, you have about a minute to finish.

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels: Okay.

Equity is important because without it the individual, community or business development corporation has an infinitely more difficult time in starting and sustaining a path to wealth creation through economic development.

Access to capital remains a barrier. In addition, we need to establish a pure equity fund. Access to capital—grants and low-cost debt—especially for large economic ventures in various industries such as a host of clean energy initiatives, mining, resource development, food security, infrastructure and more remains very difficult to secure. It's very difficult in the current capital resource economy for first nations to enter, and for many decades we've been behind, through a blockade on first nations' ability to meaningfully participate in the agricultural sector. It has been very difficult for us to engage because of the capital required and the bureaucratic interference in first nations' ability to enter these now very capital-intensive economies.

Land conversion for reserve status is a huge part of that. The isolation and lack of infrastructure are hugely important to that.

Procurement opportunities still remain abysmal when it comes to first nations. Regardless of the policy direction that's given through Ottawa, it is not always benefiting the first nations that really need to be given the opportunity to have investment in our communities.

• (1600)

The Chair: Thank you, Grand Chief. Perhaps you can expand on that in the question part.

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels: I will. Thank you.

The Chair: Now I invite Mr. Chris Googoo, who is the chief operating officer of the Ulnooweg Development Group.

Sir, you have five minutes.

Mr. Christopher Googoo (Chief Operating Officer, Ulnooweg Development Group Inc.): [*Witness spoke in Mi'kmaq and provided the following text:*]

Wela'liq iknmuioq kis luwistun. E'm kiskuk teluisik Sipekne'katik District. Wutan Millbrook First Nation, Mi'kma'ki.

[*Witness provided the following translation:*]

Thank you for allowing me to speak. Today, I am in the Sipekne'katik District, the community of Millbrook First Nation, Mi'kma'ki.

[English]

I'd like to thank you for allowing me to speak to you today on barriers to indigenous economic development. I am the chief operating officer for Ulnooweg, an aboriginal financial institution serving the needs of the Atlantic indigenous community.

Ulnooweg's inception dates back to 1985. It's one of the first aboriginal capital corporations to receive capital. Its history of 35-plus years is a testament to resilience and innovation in indigenous economic development. In its original directive, Ulnooweg was mandated to address a very broad mandate during the early years of community development: to promote the economic and social welfare of our members; to support training and education and research assistance for employment opportunities; and to provide support for benevolent and charitable enterprises and to organizations and corporations engaged in assisting the development, both economic and social, of our members.

Our first two decades of existence focused on promoting economic welfare—pigeonholed by government programming with an unfulfilled community mandate specifically to address the area defined as “developmental lending”, to this day limited on maximum lending limits by program constraints.

Ulnooweg's path to innovation began in 2004, as it realized the unmet need for capital beyond developmental lending but below the risk tolerance of mainstream institutions.

Our chair, Chief Terrance Paul of Membertou, stated in his address to the Atlantic chiefs in 2007 that in order for us to catch up with the Canadian economy, we need access to larger amounts of capital. We need financing for our community and economic infrastructure for housing, developing our fishery and forestry resources, and for business development. At the present time, we just do not have access to the capital we need. If we do not act now to lay the foundation of our own institutions to take advantage of our collective spending power, then the benefits will continue to flow out of our communities.

Ulnooweg developed a comprehensive feasibility study to establish its own Atlantic financial institution to address this gap. The market demand study led us to continue our search for innovative ways to address the capital needs of our first nations governments in Atlantic Canada.

In 2005 the First Nations Fiscal and Statistical Management Act came into effect. It was a framework built around utilizing revenue in the form of property tax and leaseholds on reserve lands to use as security for a loan from the FNFA. The immediate problem recognized by the Atlantic first nations was their own lack of property tax and leasehold revenues. Because of our prior in-depth work on the market demand study, with over half of Atlantic first nations, we were able to support the efforts of FNFA's case to recognize own-source revenues, inclusive of revenues from gaming, fishery and other business-related activities.

In 2007, in collaboration with the Atlantic policy congress of chiefs, the fishery business development team was created to address the development of the indigenous fishery sector in Atlantic Canada, its success leading to the creation of similar services in the Pacific and on northern coasts.

As our search to find innovative ways to address the access to capital needs continued, we became familiarized with the philanthropic sector, eventually identifying that our review and presentation of band-audited statements back to local chiefs and councillors, under what we now call our “community financial review” process, could be defined as charitable work. This led to the establishment in 2014 of the Ulnooweg Financial Education Centre, a charitable organization providing government financial literacy.

Our work also identifies the lack of infrastructure to accept philanthropic dollars, as first nations have never been automatically legislated to be recognized as organizations doing the work of public bodies or governments, as municipalities have been. Our work has continued to include supporting communities to gain their qualified donee status under our charity at no cost to the bands.

As we increase our efforts to support the growth of indigenous businesses, we also realize that we severely lack capacity in the technology space. Efforts for increasing procurement participation, for example, identify very low or non-existent capacity to bid on opportunities in this space or to participate in employment opportunities. Our path leads to establishing inroads into the innovation ecosystem to start identifying our needs, leading to a concerted effort to provide STEM education to indigenous youth P to 12, inspiring the next generation.

Building bridges with philanthropy has also led to Ulnooweg establishing its own charitable foundation, the Ulnooweg Indigenous Communities Foundation.

- (1605)

Its recent announcement of a \$15-million, five-year grant from the Mastercard Foundation is a testament to its innovative approach to advancing indigenous economic development, not only through the lens of business and economic development, but inclusive of education, health, recreation and community development as per its original mandate.

This can also be seen in its history of institutional development, incubating critical institutions by providing financial administration services for self-governance including the establishment of the Made-in-Nova Scotia Process, which became the Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn organization involved in treaty rights implementation. Today we are not only administering the collective commercial enterprise of the first nations bands, but we're also in the development stage of supporting the creation of a Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq-owned health authority in supporting health transformation.

Ulnoeweg's innovative approach has required increased financial support to the operations as it has grown from an organization of six persons to well over 65 today and still growing. The lack of operation support for capacity development as part of institutional growth is a common problem amongst indigenous communities throughout the country, as has been identified in the development of national institutions like the FNFMB as well.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Googoo.

We'll now get on with the first round of questions.

It's Mr. Shields from the Conservative Party for six minutes.

The floor is yours.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you to the witnesses today. I appreciate your excellent presentations.

Let's start with the far north and the first presentation.

Sir, you mentioned that funding programs are a non-starter to begin with. Would that be true?

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu: Yes, the funding programs in the north are like more programs designed for communities and municipalities. For example, the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency provides funding directly to the government of those territories and municipalities and various program dollars for the communities.

Mr. Martin Shields: They're programs in the sense that you apply for a program and you receive funding. Does that also lead into the situation that you refer to as contractors and consultants? You can't have people there, so the funding allows you to basically get southern consultants and contractors.

Is that an issue you're referring to?

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu: That is also an issue with southern contractors and consultants. There are some based in the north.

I wanted to get focused a little bit more on the programs. With programs, the most you can apply for is \$15,000 or \$25,000. With the coalitions initiative and the strategic planning, you can't build an economy on \$15,000 to \$25,000 a year.

Mr. Martin Shields: In a sense, the base funding is not there to develop what you need to do for economic development. Is that what you're suggesting?

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu: Yes.

Mr. Martin Shields: It's the finances coming north as well as the people being employed in the north to make those decisions. Is that what you're asking for?

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu: Yes. There has to be some adequate financing. Part of that is looking at some investment dollars for infrastructure. Once that's in place, that can be used to leverage private equity and be able to start looking at a planned economy versus the reactionary economy that we've experienced in last 20 to 30 years.

Mr. Martin Shields: Right, thank you.

For the diamond mining, of course, you seemed to be well connected. I think I have a couple of diamonds with polar bears on them that probably came out of significant development to do that mining.

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu: Yes, I'm not sure if I sold you those diamonds but....

Mr. Martin Shields: But that's where they came from.

Thank you.

Mr. Daniels, in the sense of a regional.... One thing I would ask you, though, is about the critical aspect of education. You've slightly referred to it. In your view, how critical is to connect education to economic development?

• (1610)

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels: Education needs to be reflective of the local economy and the opportunities that are available within it, which are not always present, and clearly connected to the training that is being done in the region. Emerging industries are very important, but first nations definitely have a hard time accessing or being a genuine partner with industry, because of the lack of capital that's available and the experience within those areas.

We suggest that something like a peer equity fund be established for use by first nations and regional development corporations that can access equity, to help them get a start in significant business opportunity areas—whatever areas they may be—that would not have as many strings attached as we've seen previously. This would level the playing field, because first nations, for decades, have been left out of many industries and haven't been able to develop or accumulate a significant amount of capital that they can diversify to a large extent.

I think this is what's been creating the sustained poverty and the continued increasing gap within the region. Transfer payments within social programs can only go so far. Many of our communities are stuck managing poverty, and we need to shift that focus toward creating opportunity and partnerships, and building those relationships with the private sector. That needs the support of Canada.

Canada needs to be able to create a willingness and openness to have first nations not only be involved in that area, but to be real contributors. The investment that happened here in Manitoba with the protein plant could have been done on a first nations reserve. Many of the—

Mr. Martin Shields: You're touching on directly where I would go. When you talk about land base, that's critical in the sense of those partnership opportunities. You've got the one example that's popped out. Do you have others that you would like to suggest?

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels: There are numerous examples. We have a film industry that's being developed here in southern Manitoba. First nations are not engaged at the table. We've just recently started speaking with some of the local leadership about this, but that's through our own work here at SCEDC. We're continuing to have those conversations.

Again, there is a lack of equity and lack of capital within many of our communities, which are utilizing their land claims in many instances—land claims that they should have had for decades and decades—in order to try to get themselves involved in these industries with not a whole lot of expertise, because they don't have the decades and decades of experience within business management.

A lot of us are behind the gun on this. We rely, as some have said, on business analysts and business consultants, which does not always end up being the best scenario for us or the best way forward. Some of us are successful, some are not, but the vast majority don't see their quality of life improving, and that's the problem.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. McLeod, you have six minutes.

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to welcome our presenters, Chief Daniels, Chris Googoo and, from the Northwest Territories, Darrell Beaulieu.

It's a real pleasure to hear the presentations, with lots of good information.

My question is for Darrell Beaulieu. I know personally that Denendeh developments has interests in a wide variety of sectors. Are there any particular sectors of the economy that, as an indigenous organization, you have found more difficult to get involved in? If so, what steps can the Government of Canada take to help organizations like yours diversify into some of these new fields?

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu: Thank you very much, Michael.

As you mentioned, we've been involved in utilities and the oil and gas sector for many years. As the mining industry is driving the economy in the Northwest Territories, especially in the diamond areas, for a number of years the indigenous groups have really focused on providing services to the mines and building up that capacity. In the 1990s, there were a handful of indigenous businesses providing those supplies and services. Now there are close to 100, but then you have to realize that mines have finite life cycle and that's coming to an end. We have to diversify.

One of the biggest challenges is the infrastructure development for hydro, transmission lines, transportation corridors, and so on. That's going to take a lot of capital. It's going to take technical capacity and a lot of planning, and a lot of quality project preparation processes that cost a hell of a lot of money: feasibility studies, market assessments, competitive analysis, engineering, legal analysis, environmental impact assessment, structured financing plans, financial transaction plans, implementation plans, and so on.

Just the fact of looking at a project takes a lot of capacity—financial, legal, environmental, and so on—working with governments, the regulatory processes, the banks, and private equity when required. That's where I think there's a real shortfall in funding indigenous businesses in the north, or not only in the north but right across the country.

That's going to take a lot of work, because at the end of the day, as Jerry mentioned, it's going to be the jobs, direct benefits of jobs into the people's pockets in our communities and our respective regions that's going to make a difference.

• (1615)

Mr. Michael McLeod: Thank you for that.

As you know, Darrell, I've been very interested in the work you've been doing with the NWT indigenous leaders economic coalition and now you have an opportunity to talk to the Government of Canada and talk to this committee.

How can the Government of Canada better support your vision for a better future for indigenous economic development in the Northwest Territories?

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu: We all have roles to play in developing the economy of the north. That includes a partnership. However, those partnerships have to have real activity.

We're dealing with a multitude of participants, whether it's government and indigenous governments or indigenous business. That's a major discussion that we've been having at the coalition in trying to move this forward and looking at identifying some of those projects, doing evaluations and then getting into the nitty-gritty of discussions on financing.

The adequate capital to do all of that is a requirement. We don't need to set up new institutions. You already have existing institutions that have been doing this for 20 or 30 years. Those existing institutions also have chief strategy officers; we have chief financial officers; we have financial teams.

The structure is there. It's just a matter of the political will to make it happen.

The Chair: Mr. McLeod, you have 30 seconds.

Mr. Michael McLeod: I just want to ask about fairness.

Darrell, do you feel that the indigenous businesses in the north are treated the same as they are on reserve and in the south?

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu: I can answer that very clearly: No.

For the indigenous peoples in the north, because there are no reserves and because of the programs being transferred to third parties like the GNWT and CanNor, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has really stepped back. None of the funding comes north anymore. It's just those program dollars that I spoke to earlier. That really puts indigenous peoples on their heels here.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McLeod.

[Translation]

Mrs. Gill, you have six minutes.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I would like to thank all of the witnesses for their testimony, which is giving us possible solutions today. I found everything that they said interesting.

I would like us to take a step back from some issues that we have been discussing since the beginning, even though they may be very important, like access to capital.

Mr. Daniels said that there are other types of problems that first nations are facing, particularly with respect to education, housing, health and basic infrastructure, specifically issues related to drinking water.

I would like each of the witnesses to explain to us how all of those issues represent a barrier to entrepreneurship. There is the issue of capital, but first there needs to be entrepreneurs, people who want to do business.

How does this harm entrepreneurship, and what would be possible solutions?

We could certainly talk about equity, in the short term, to support indigenous entrepreneurship.

[English]

The Chair: The question is for all three of you. Let's just say Mr. Beaulieu, if you want to start it off.

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu: Unfortunately, I did not get the interpretation.

The Chair: All right.

Chief Daniels, did you get the interpretation?

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels: I just caught the last of it because I was looking for it, but I didn't catch the whole thing.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Mr. Chair, would you allow me to repeat my question once everyone has access to the interpretation? I may have caught people off guard.

The Chair: I don't know whether Mr. Beaulieu will have access to it. It was maybe not set up.

Yes, please repeat your question.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: I won't repeat my thanks, so that things move along a bit faster.

I understood everything that was said about access to capital, which is an overriding issue, of course. However, when we talk about access to entrepreneurship, there are other barriers that affect people more closely, like schools, housing, health and basic infrastructure.

I would like all of the witnesses to address this issue and give us possible solutions to tackle these problems for current and future entrepreneurs.

[English]

The Chair: Chief Daniels, if you got that, go ahead with an answer. We'll go to the other two after.

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels: Absolutely.

Many would be aware that we face a systemic discrimination challenge in this country at the jobs level and the hiring level. We hear about it quite a bit from our members, who are going to differ-

ent sites in northern Manitoba and different regions looking for work.

To look on the solution side, how do we change that? As I've said, we need the best teachers. We need a competitive education system. The best in the world is always what we're shooting for in looking for the best practices. We absolutely need to give our entrepreneurs the support that they need in accessing and entering different industries, and we see it happening. However, we need to keep in mind that decades of barriers, and even blockades, for first nations entering industry have been hugely significant.

It's incremental. How incrementally is the government willing to accept the changes? Is the incremental expansion of economic development, as opposed to the poverty that we're experiencing, going to change anything significantly in improving wellness and quality of life?

That's the challenge for all leaders and those who are talking about economic development and trying to create opportunities. Are we doing enough? Are we removing enough red tape? Are we creating enough access to capital? Are we including the most marginalized demographic in many of the investments that are coming from foreign companies and countries? We're not involved at those tables. We're involved at the lower ends of the subcontracts and the benefits, and not part of the main discussions of investment.

There are millions of acres owed to first nations in southern Manitoba alone. These acres of land represent wealth and investment that we are not a part of. Equity needs to be made available so that we can be meaningful partners, build on that experience from there and hopefully lead to more diversified wealth.

There are two tiers to this, because we have to work with municipalities, provinces and the federal government, which have set up a governmental relationship that excluded first nations and continues to do that. Those are real struggles that we have.

If we're going to change the quality of life, it's going to have to address all of those things. I think a pure equity solution is going to help in trying to streamline and give first nations people more benefits and opportunities to engage in the emerging industries.

• (1625)

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: I held off on interrupting you, Mr. Daniels, because I have found someone who speaks as much and as passionately about this topic as I do.

I'd like to ask you another question. Earlier, you raised the issue of bureaucratic interference, which is a whole other matter.

I'd like you to tell me a bit more about this, if possible.

[English]

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels: I could talk all day about this. I could talk about how the provinces like to take away our tobacco tax and try to strip us...and impose their jurisdiction in first nations. You don't see that in Ontario.

It's also about fairness. We've always been fair. The treaty process was fair. The survival of many of the settlers who came here in the early days was dependent on first nations. We were the social contributors. We contributed to the survival of settlers in our territories, so that value system continues today. It's all about fairness, and we've been a part of that.

Equity is about fairness. You can't say that a first nations child born in a first nations community has the same equity as someone born in middle-class Winnipeg. It's just not the same. You're not experiencing the same decades and decades of poverty and all of the other stuff that goes with it. That's what we've been doing in order to bring continuity in terms of our cultural values to economic development.

The Chair: Thank you, Chief.

We have used up the time, but I was wondering if you wanted to comment as well, Mr. Googoo.

Mr. Christopher Googoo: As I mentioned, we have three separate institutions within Ulnooweg, and each has a different approach to this. As an organization with over 65 staff, we have a very youthful population internally, with probably 55% to 60% under 35. As part of this, our onboarding process involves something as simple as lunch with an elder or traditional knowledge holder. All of our staff sit down at lunch with our remote communities as well to gain this knowledge from traditional people and elders and talk about things like history, residential school experiences and Indian day school experiences, and to bring them back to the values and where they come from.

Under our education centre, we have been very critical in how we approach science and use the teachings of Albert Marshall and his term "*Etuaptmumk*"—two-eyed seeing. How do we bring science and indigenous knowledge together to create an environment of reconciliation, for example?

Our foundation has built-in links with university and college students. We're integrating culture into their learning journey so that they stay rooted within the communities. As one of the most exciting things that we've done most recently, in December we purchased 200 acres of ancient Wabanaki forest and are creating an education and healing centre, which again results in bringing those traditional teachings, not only through science but also through business and economic development.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Googoo.

That completes the first round. We will move to the second round.

This committee is coming to you from the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe—an oversight on my part.

Mr. Vidal, you can kick us off. You have five minutes.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You surprised me. I thought you said we maybe weren't going to go on to the second round. I will gladly do that.

The Chair: We will start the second round. I'm going to try to get the first four in.

Mr. Gary Vidal: That's fair game. I'll take that opportunity. Thank you.

I want to thank all the witnesses today. There's been excellent testimony today, and I appreciate you taking time to be here and contribute to our discussion on the barriers to indigenous business.

Each of you in your comments made reference to the First Nations Fiscal Management Act organizations. You've talked about access to capital, and you've talked about a number of things that may play a role in that.

If I could, I'll start with Grand Chief Daniels. In the reference to the fiscal management act, you guys represent multiple first nations in your organizations. My understanding is that one of the limitations to accessing equity under the First Nations Fiscal Management Act organizations is that it has to be done at the individual first nation level. It can't be done by a tribal council or a by a large organization representing multiple first nations.

I'll start with Mr. Daniels, and then each of you can maybe make just make a quick comment on whether that's been your experience and whether that is a limiting factor for you.

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels: I think that we always want to make these things much easier for first nations to have meaningful involvement, and absolutely we haven't seen that. We haven't been given that opportunity, so we want to be given that opportunity.

SCO represents first nations that are isolated and don't have a whole lot of opportunity. They're not developing urban reserves in Winnipeg. They're all Anishinabe, but we have three, four or five communities that are probably decades away from really seeing any sort of significant economic development in any of the really important market areas of southern Manitoba.

Our approach is really to try to support those communities and try to build partnerships and support the work that they should be given the opportunity to achieve. That's what SCO has been working on in terms of economic development because we're thinking of all 34. My community, for example, of Long Plain First Nation is doing great here in Winnipeg, but that does nothing for Pauingassi, Poplar River or Little Grand Rapids, who, I will also say, have the most child apprehensions in all of Canada. It has to do with a lack of opportunity, economic development and support in that region.

We think of those communities at SCO. We think of the communities that are behind. In terms of equity, there's just no comparison. They don't have the same opportunity, so we have to try to support those regions that are not in a place where they can capitalize on it.

When I think of the management act, I'm not sure how that will benefit communities like that, but SCO can take the approach and the lead for those communities and hopefully strengthen all of us by tying us together as one. That's the approach we would like to take.

● (1640)

Mr. Gary Vidal: Thank you. I appreciate that. I don't want to cut you off, but I'm so limited on time here.

Mr. Beaulieu, would you want to comment on your experience with the equity access from the First Nations Fiscal Management Act folks?

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu: Thank you very much.

The first nations financial act is not equal across Canada. In the north, we can't access it unless you are first nations and on reserve, or under the Indian Act. Now you have land claims and self-government agreements. If you have a self-government agreement, you can't access that equity or that funding, and neither can organizations such as Denendeh Development Corporation, Denendeh Investments and so on. I think financing needs to be treated equally so that people can access and leverage that, as mentioned earlier.

Mr. Gary Vidal: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Your comments about access to capital and leveraging equity investments as being key to many of the solutions, I think, are part of where I'm coming at this from.

Mr. Googoo, did you want to comment on that as well? I'm going to give you the opportunity quickly before I run out of time here.

Mr. Christopher Googoo: Thank you.

As I've mentioned, our work with FNFA and expanding the definition of own-source revenues has made us privy to a lot of information. We have worked with the 13 bands, for example, in Nova Scotia here, in accessing FNFA financing through other deals like Arctic surf clam and within the cannabis industry.

We weren't directly involved with Clearwater, for example, but we were definitely involved leading up to Clearwater and building the capacity of first nations communities. As I mentioned, we were also involved through our work with the community financial review process and supporting the capacity development of communities to then get scheduled into FMB.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vidal.

Mr. Battiste, you have five minutes.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): *Wela'liog.* I'm very happy to see some friends on the panel. Chris Googoo and Grand Chief Daniels, it's very good to see you. I have questions that are related to both of you and what you said around access to capital. I've seen some amazing things during my time as a member of Parliament, especially, Chris, as you mentioned, the Clearwater deal, which was a \$1-billion acquisition largely led by Mi'kmaq communities. I'm wondering if both of you could just speak to me for a minute about why it's important to have access to capital.

Mr. Googoo and Grand Chief Daniels.

Mr. Christopher Googoo: I think our 35-year history has proven that access to capital is one of the levers to provide our participation in the economy, especially when we're talking about revenue sources to potentially run our own governments. Our reliance right now on own-source revenues to fill those gaps that exist within our programming without OSR is detrimental for us. There have been discussions in earlier talks about transfer of payments and money ties in those transfer payments, for example, like infrastructure financing. I think those are great ideas.

In terms of the larger access to capital needs of communities, there is a gap that still exists along the curb of access to capital leading to mainstream institutions and the private market. That gap still exists, and it is something that we continue to look to fill. It is not an easy thing to fill.

I have an example where we went to the mainstream financial institutions to get capital to address that gap with a 1:1 ratio cover from the philanthropic sector, and still the mainstream institutions did not support capitalizing an AFI because of a systemic barrier of discrimination, or whatever you want to call it. Those things exist, and as I think you know very well, an increase in economic development through increased participation with access to capital leads to improvements in health, education and social determinants.

● (1645)

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Thank you.

Grand Chief.

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels: Anyone who is involved in the private sector knows that it's always very competitive. You have to have the relationships in order to know where to purchase and where the best labour is for whatever industry you're working in. Capital is an important part of that in order for you to take a position, whether it is as a partner or as an owner. There are lots of opportunities that could potentially have been available here for first nations as a collective. The cannabis industry was one big part of that.

There's an exclusion of first nations from many of the industries here in Manitoba, and we haven't been able to capitalize to the extent where you're starting to see quality of life change, or you're starting to see job growth outpace population growth. Poverty growth continues to be the trend here in Manitoba, and it's leading to an 11-year gap in life expectancy.

It's important that there be an availability of capital for us in order to make purchases in different major infrastructure developments like the transmission line that went through. There could have been an opportunity there for us to own. There are many expansions happening in different suburbs throughout Manitoba, throughout Winnipeg. We don't own that land.

Meanwhile, we're owed millions of acres, but it's business as usual while we're still left negotiating 20 years after the agreement was signed. It's twenty-five years later, and we're still sitting here without capital, without the land and still being told to wait. Hopefully, one day we may get those lands back, but in the meantime, industry is continuing to move forward, and capital is restrictive; so is the bureaucratic red tape. When it came to cannabis, we were excluded. When we try to create our own industries, the province comes down on us and tries to regulate and closes down our shops.

That's the challenge for us. It's an economic blockade, and we need to continue to address it. These are the reasons there's poverty for first nations. There's not a lot of support for foreign investment for first nations communities, or to give the guarantees for foreign investment into first nations. That could be located near railway lands. That could be located in market areas that are favourable for investment. Those are the challenges that are important for us to understand and hopefully to address.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Battiste.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Gill, you have two and a half minutes.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Grand Chief Daniels also raised the issue of the geographic distance of markets. I would imagine that the costs are higher. There is also the matter of labour.

I would like him to talk a bit more about geographic remoteness. If time permits, the other witnesses could then answer the question.

[*English*]

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels: One of the significant solutions to what you're talking about is connectivity in our communities and the online economic development opportunities for training, universities, certification, and all of those things. It's obviously not the directly applied arts, because to be able to get the job-site training is much more difficult, but there are opportunities in that sense.

It's still limited, so I think it's important for us, especially for communities that are isolated, that they be given opportunities within the urban areas.

I think they have taken a very progressive approach, because there is a collective educational system here for the southeast communities in Winnipeg. It's been here for a long time. It's been successful. Is it changing the socio-economic status? It's certainly happening—probably a bit—but I don't think it's outgrowing the pace at which we're experiencing socio-economic problems.

I think it's challenging, but there are solutions in terms of connectivity. That's a huge part of it. It's also about building that relationship with communities to create opportunities.

There isn't an arm that's aggressive enough to go after many of the private sector partners that should also be held accountable for including first nations and for giving them jobs, rather than simply reporting in a way that doesn't truly represent first nations citizens, so I think much of that is happening as well.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mrs. Gill.

[*English*]

Ms. Idlout, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: I think I've used only a minute and 50 seconds of my time, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: No, it was two and a half minutes.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Idlout, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Thank you so much.

I just want to ask the three witnesses something again, and maybe I'll switch the order from the last speaker to the most recent one.

I am struck by the expertise that you all have in each of your areas and the experience you've all had with being indigenous and the barriers you've had to face.

I also really want to react to Grand Chief Daniels about how things are incremental when it comes to first nations, Métis and Inuit economic development. I think it's beyond incremental. I think it's actual suppression. I think government policies purposely make sure that first nations, Métis and Inuit communities are not able to do as well in economic development.

My question to all three of you is, how would you change federal policies for these traditional economies, which I asked you more about, so that they could be better accepted? What kinds of policies would you see in which change is needed to make sure we can have better engagement with first nations, Métis and Inuit businesses?

The Chair: I'm afraid you're each going to have about 20 seconds.

Mr. Googoo, do you want to start?

Mr. Christopher Googoo: I would say greater flexibility in policy is needed, as well as devolution to indigenous-owned institutions.

The Chair: Chief Daniels.

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels: Make land available. Stop regulating first nations when it comes to economic growth or economic investment. Give us a guarantee for first nations that want to have foreign investment, and give us our land so that we can develop our land and create opportunities.

Get the bureaucracy out of the way. First nations can do well as long as we stop seeing the interference and the blockading in our economies.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Beaulieu.

Mr. Darrell Beaulieu: As one of the first steps, there have been so many recommendations from the various organizations and institutions over the last 20 to 30 years, I think it's time we started actioning some of those recommendations on the ground in the north.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would like to thank our three panellists this afternoon, Chief Daniels, Darrell Beaulieu and Chris Googoo, for offering their time to answer our many questions today. It was very much appreciated. This will help us with our study.

Committee members, we will now proceed seamlessly, hopefully, into the second panel. We'll be hearing from Thomas Benjoe, CEO, File Hills Qu'Appelle Developments; Andy Moorhouse, vice-president of economic development, Makivik Corporation; and Carlana Lindeman, education program director, Martin Family Initiative.

We'll start off by listening to Mr. Benjoe.

Mr. Benjoe, you have five minutes to make your presentation.

Thank you.

• (1655)

Mr. Thomas Benjoe (President and Chief Executive Officer, File Hills Qu'Appelle Developments): Perfect. Thanks so much.

Welcome everyone. *Pidamaya*.

Thank you for giving me time to speak on behalf of FHQ Developments, which represents the File Hills Tribal Council within the Treaty 4 territory in Saskatchewan. I am a member of Muscowpetung First Nation.

When we look at some of the barriers to economic participation for indigenous communities, we have to go back to having a look at the economic and socio-economic impacts that we need to demand for some of the projects that happen within our territories, and how we manage business and create those business relationships within our territories.

I look at quite a number of projects that are federally or provincially funded, projects that happen within the territory. Let's go back and try to assess what is accountability and transparency on these projects for indigenous participation. We're told that there are indigenous procurement policies in place and that they're going to spend so many dollars with indigenous companies and employ so many indigenous people, but the experience that I've had in my five years as CEO is that a lot of times policy dictates sometimes negative relationships, where organizations are willing to do just enough in order to secure a contract or to meet the premise of indigenous procurement policies. On the labour side of the coin, we see major projects where it's just enough to get an indigenous person a job for a period of time for a project, versus actually building and developing capacity for our own people.

These are things that are often very frustrating for us when we see these major projects in our territories. They continue to move forward and to talk about the success, but that success is only transactional in nature and only at one point in time, rather than being built on a relationship between those businesses, those projects and the first nations in those territories.

Those are some aspects that I know we've seen in a lot of projects. Based on the types of policies that we see within our territory, I know that we've had to change the way we do business as an organization. Our focus is absolutely on economic and socio-economic impacts. That means that we not only need to build a business portfolio that is competitive and can compete in the markets with non-indigenous businesses, we also have the responsibility of economic development and making sure that we're building the indigenous business ecosystem around us. How do we bring our nations, how do we bring our entrepreneurs and our citizens together with us in economic prosperity with these projects?

The third piece to this is how we actually develop indigenous talent alongside the opportunities, so we have a very specific strategy that focuses on indigenous participation. That means that we are taking the time to understand the work and the careers that are to be built. We're not here to just fill numbers for organizations. We are here to actually build careers, so our team of indigenous HR specialists works with organizations to develop more thorough plans on how we're going to see the opportunity, see the careers, so that our young people....

If we work with an organization, and let's say 10 years out they're going to need a certain type of engineer or a certain type of skill set, we want to begin doing the career coaching and mentorship that is necessary with organizations to build relationships between those organizations and our nations, and between our businesses and those individuals, so that when our youth are looking at opportunity for the future, at least they know we're there supporting them and trying to find opportunity that isn't just another training program for the sake of training; we're actually training them for career opportunities.

• (1700)

That's a really important aspect of the way we've been able to navigate strategy.

When we look at the history of our organization, we're considered to be a bit young. We're in our infancy as an organization. We've only been around for a little over 10 years, but we started with very low investment from our nations. We've leveraged relationships and strategy, and we've used what government programs we've been able to access to be able to build and develop the business model we now have as an organization.

Clearwater has also been mentioned. It is now 50% owned by a coalition of first nations, particularly the Mi'kmaq people in Atlantic Canada.

The Clarke Lake Geothermal Project by the Fort Nelson First Nation is one of Canada's first geothermal electricity facilities.

Another example are the massive wind farms in northeastern Ontario, New Brunswick and Quebec.

Last would be the huge transmission project here in northwestern Ontario that connects 17 first nations communities.

These examples clearly illustrate the economic impact now and the potential economic impact of indigenous people in our country. We know how much of a benefit that is, not only to indigenous people but to Canadians as a whole.

The Martin Family Initiative believes that Canadians must ensure that indigenous children, youth and adults receive the education they require since they are such a vital part of Canada's present and future.

We believe that education is a key way of eliminating barriers to economic development. We cannot build a strong country if we turn our backs on the youngest, fastest-growing segment of our population. This requires all of us to work together to ensure that indigenous people have the knowledge and skills they need to participate in these exemplary ventures, others, and those of the future.

To this end, MFI—our acronym for our organization—has developed a suite of programs to introduce business education to first nations elementary school students, indigenous high school students and indigenous adults across Canada.

I'm going to spend a little bit of time describing the three programs for you.

The first was launched in 2006 at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School in Thunder Bay. It's the aboriginal youth entrepreneurship program, which is a program of two credits of 110 hours each in the final two years of high school. It introduces indigenous students to a wide range of business opportunities that are available within the Canadian economy.

The program teaches these students how they can follow in the path of inspiring indigenous role models and find success within their communities and the Canadian economy at large. The courses help these students to succeed in high school, in the workplace, in post-secondary studies and in life. They are designed to improve proficiency in business math, English, financial literacy, accounting, business marketing, and information and communications technology, all while supporting the acquisition of leadership skills and communication skills. Since its launch, almost 6,300 high school students across the country have enrolled in the program, with about a 75% completion rate. In some years it's been as high as 80%.

The second program was created at the request of leaders in Manitoba. They were very familiar with the high school program but said they needed something for indigenous adult learners. We created a 60-hour program called the "indigenous entrepreneurship course", which has the key elements of the high school program. It,

too, has been very successful. We do a lot of evaluation and receive feedback from the instructors and students in all of our programs, and we use that to continually improve it.

Our third program is under way right now and is being piloted in first nations schools in Alberta and Saskatchewan. With the support of NGen, the Canadian manufacturing super cluster, we've developed two courses for grades 6, 7 and 8 students who attend first nations elementary schools. The first is called "introduction to financial literacy" and the second is "introduction to entrepreneurship". Once the pilot is finished and we've changed the courses based on the feedback from schools, teachers, parents, elders and knowledge-keepers, our goal is to expand across the country.

• (1710)

To support all three of these programs, we've developed a series of textbooks and teacher resource guides. We incorporate indigenous examples; case studies; teaching tools, such as the medicine wheel and indigenous role models; and we use the seven sacred teachings as the ethical basis of business. We have dedicated coordinators who provide training and ongoing support for the schools.

We've also developed a number of extra resources. For example, we've developed food and tourism sector materials for students who are interested in entrepreneurship activities in either food or tourism. We're currently creating an app, which we think is the first high school business app anywhere in the country, and it will be available free to students. We also have case studies of indigenous entrepreneurs and related materials. In collaboration with NGen, we're developing a series of materials to support the manufacturing sector in Canada with a focus on developing a product for students. We also have a Google Chat site—which has really blossomed over the last two years—on which we post print and video resources that classroom teachers and students can use to support the program.

I'd be very pleased to discuss any of these programs with you and to talk about our experiences so far.

Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lindeman.

We'll proceed with the first round of questions, starting with Mr. Schmale from the Conservative Party. You have six minutes, sir.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for this great conversation and a very interesting topic.

Mr. Moorhouse, I will start with you. You commented on some of the challenges you have in the north attracting business. Can you tell us about some of the other challenges you're having in regard to energy and the price of it and what barriers that creates with respect to attracting businesses, keeping costs in line and that sort of thing?

Mr. Andy Moorhouse: Thank you.

With regard to energy, all we have are diesel-operated generators, and that's within all 14 communities. As mentioned, we're not connected to the electrical grid, and additional extensive investment would have to be done in order to reach all 14 communities, because you're talking about one-third of the province, at the northernmost part of the province. We would have to do an extensive study of what opportunities there are for generating electricity within the north, but also take into account the challenges. As I said, today we're dealing with -55 °C with the wind chill. I can't imagine what it would do to certain infrastructure such as windmills, so you have to take that into consideration. What other options are there? There isn't much sunlight during the day this time of the year. Quite an extensive study would have to be done in order to identify what opportunities there are for generating electricity in order to have affordable operating costs for businesses in the north.

• (1715)

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Yes, -55 °C, I can't even imagine. I'm a shorts-and-sandals kind of guy, so I can't imagine what you're dealing with in that cold.

In terms of the energy source, which I think is something we've been hearing over and over again, in a previous Parliament, we actually did a study in a different committee on this sort thing and on supplying energy to communities that are rural and remote, especially in Canada's north. Is there any additional talk about SMRs or potentially using them in the future, based on the studies and practicality of small modular reactors?

Mr. Andy Moorhouse: There's none that I have heard. I know that there have been some studies done on wind power, solar power and hydroelectric power in some of the communities, but at the same time, traditional territory, traditional activities, harvesting rights and those kinds of activities need to be properly balanced with the communities' needs. In regard to your specific point, I've not heard of any discussions or studies about SMRs, as you were saying.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Okay. I appreciate that. I do understand that energy is a huge concern, and the cost of it.

If I can, maybe I can quickly go to Mr. Benjoe because I think I'm running out of time.

The Chair: You have two minutes and 28 seconds.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Two minutes? Okay, I thought I was down to a minute. Perfect.

Mr. Benjoe, if I could, along the lines of building capacity, specifically in regard to Indigenous Services Canada, I think some of the comments we've been hearing in previous testimony are that this department is really in the business of program funding more

than anything, and not really looking towards the future or thinking in terms of what can be done if we allow more collaboration.

Maybe you can just tell us a bit about some things the department could do better in order to help indigenous communities reach their goals.

Mr. Thomas Benjoe: I think we really need to look outside of the box in terms of new solutions and new ways of looking at developing capacity. We had discussions last week with organizations that are developing micro credentials. The demand for micro credentials in the future is going to help break down academic barriers that have been created, which keep a lot of our people in the dark for participation. I think there is a major disruption that is coming. Then again, look at what access to infrastructure looks like in our communities, and if we don't have good Internet, if we don't have fibre, it makes it a little difficult to be able to access that level of training and education.

I'll use an example. We have a very successful software testing company in Saskatchewan called PLATO Sask Testing. We actually have one of our testers who lives on the Flying Dust First Nation, who is doing work for a company out of Calgary for a client who is in Portugal.

Where infrastructure does exist, we are demonstrating the impact that investment makes for us to be successful and to build that capacity. Now we know that we can begin looking at youth from some of these communities, making that investment in a different type of training and utilizing micro credentials or being able to develop our own training programs to uplift our youth.

• (1720)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schmale.

Ms. Atwin, you have six minutes.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses today for joining us.

I want to start with Mr. Benjoe, if I can.

You mentioned specifically an angle of socio-economics as well. I am just wondering if there are any additional barriers to economic development for specific groups of indigenous people such as women, two-spirited people and persons with disabilities. If it exists, what is your organization doing to work to combat these ongoing barriers?

Mr. Thomas Benjoe: My philosophy on making sure that every aspect of our first nations community is supported is that instead of trying to take things on our own as a development corporation, we've chosen to partner. We've partnered with Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan. We've partnered with Economic Development Regina. We've created programming together to support our entrepreneurs and to specifically look at the barriers that our women entrepreneurs may face through the Matchstick program that was created.

I know that capital has come up quite a few times here. We've been trying to knock on federal doors to ask, "Can we get a separate fund established for access to capital for our indigenous women entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan?" We'd love to be able to have access to that.

The reason we need it to be different is because some of the basic criteria of being able to access that capital are a little different. If we're coming from families or entrepreneurs who don't have assets to be able to use as collateral, the chances of them accessing the current capital are such that it's not going to work. There are things like that.

We've been working with our non-indigenous partners and collaborating. We just created a new mentorship program that's going to be able to access significant capacity from the business community so that our entrepreneurs can pick up the phone and give them a call.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: That's excellent. Thank you so much.

I'm going to move to Ms. Lindeman.

Given the devastating legacy of residential schools and the need for "by indigenous, for indigenous", how does the Martin Institute approach the issue of decolonizing education?

Dr. Carlana Lindeman: Our programs are focused on business.

In terms of decolonizing, we do compulsory training for the teachers and the principal with whom we work, and we provide ongoing support. In that training, we ask the teachers to really reach out to the community, because this is a community program. The schools cannot offer it alone for either the adult or the youth.

Who are the elders, the knowledge-keepers, the indigenous business owners, and the mentors who will come into the classroom to talk about their experiences such as the panellists today who have talked about their experiences and given their best advice? We do a lot of explaining to the schools that this is not a traditional bricks-and-mortar—or virtual over the last two years—program, but it's definitely a community-based program with a focus on indigenous students. Therefore the program is for indigenous students with support from the wider indigenous community.

I hope that helps to answer your question.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: That's great. Thank you so much.

Dr. Carlana Lindeman: Thank you.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Really quickly with my remaining time, I would like to go to Mr. Moorhouse now.

Just to kind of flip this conversation on its head a bit and move to a less deficit-based model, what are the enablers of economic development in the north with the organization that you work for? Can you talk about some of the successful things that have been done that can help enable further growth?

Mr. Andy Moorhouse: Partnership is one main point for sure. We have a successful shrimp fishing partnership in the Maritimes that creates employment both for a lot of people from Newfoundland and for some people from our region who would have to travel.

Our corporation has developed internal businesses such as our own regional airline. We do have Inuit pilots and Inuit flight attendants. Many of our ground operations are, at some points, 100% Inuit managed in each community, so we do have a lot of success stories.

Partnerships are one key point that we need to promote, and this is what we're working towards especially across the north with the six different regions of Inuit across the Canadian Arctic. We do have a partnership and we're working towards developing additional partnerships that would create more jobs for our respective regions.

Partnership is one of the key points that we've promoted over the last few years.

• (1725)

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Very quickly, Mr. Benjoe, do you have anything to add to that as far as some of the enablers go?

Mr. Thomas Benjoe: I think one of the enablers is definitely going back to partnerships and making sure that we do have the right partners in place and that there is a strong alignment of values, as well as making sure that they see themselves in the vision of our indigenous organizations.

It's beyond reconciliation. This is being competitive for the future and strengthening our economy together.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Atwin.

Mr. Garon, you have six minutes.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I would like to thank the three witnesses. Their comments were very interesting.

I would like to address my first question to Mr. Moorhouse.

Mr. Moorhouse, you told us about all the challenges related to remoteness, the fact that you are located in the far north, infrastructure and transportation problems, and so on.

Do you think that government assistance and support programs do a good job of taking your specific realities into account? Please provide a detailed response.

[*English*]

Mr. Andy Moorhouse: It's hard to make a one-for-all type of program, especially with the number of first nations and indigenous groups across Canada. Until you get to a point where you're able to earmark each program geared towards a province or a specific group of people, they will always have challenges. This is a fact that we've had to deal with over the years. We try to access a certain amount of funds in order to generate business support within the communities, but there are certain rules that do not reflect our concerns or our issues, one being access to capital.

Mr. Andy Moorhouse: I think the biggest support would be subsidies in regard to infrastructure, either in the form of grants or at least in the form of long-term, interest-free loans. That would be one of the best avenues in order for us to have access to funding to gain that capital required for businesses to succeed in the north.

It's challenging enough to be able to construct this infrastructure, but it's also another challenge to keep them operating. So either grants or, at least, interest-free loans, would be the best options for northern Inuit *denougut*.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Thank you so much, Andy.

My next question is to Carlana Lindeman.

I really appreciate the programming that you offer for first nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

We all know that systemic racism exists, because the mainstream society has not been fully aware of the history of the atrocities hidden from Canadians. Have you considered any programming to help educate mainstream students so that they can become aware of the realities faced by first nations, Métis and Inuit students and why it's important to support first nations, Métis and Inuit in terms of economic development as well?

Dr. Carlana Lindeman: The entrepreneurships are three of our nine major programs.

One of the other major programs we have is what we think is one of the world's largest virtual libraries. It's called "Promising Practices in Indigenous Education". It is research, resources, classroom curriculum, teaching ideas and exposés, if you like, about residential schools and truth and reconciliation. It's focused on educators, policy-makers, parents, students, student teachers and universities and on kindergarten to grade 12 and early education.

We added a whole section on COVID when COVID broke out so that we could help schools with strategies to support their schools and their communities, particularly the on-reserve schools and the northern schools.

We also do up-to-date issues and the media. It's free. It's widely used. Most the materials are Canadian; about a third are in French. We also have some materials from Australia, New Zealand and the States, but they're primarily Canadian, and we're always looking for new material. For anything that's about curriculum or in the news, we add it, and we are constantly asking people how to improve our site.

Thank you for letting me speak about that. That wasn't part of our focus. We also definitely have sections on supporting indigenous business from a student's point of view.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Idlout. That's the six minutes.

Colleagues, we're extremely tight on time, but I'd like to start a second round, a truncated one. We'll just get through four people: the Conservatives for three minutes, the Liberals for three minutes and one and a half minutes for each of the Bloc and NDP.

I'm going to assume that all of you want to ask at least another question. On that assumption, I'd like to give the floor to Ms. Stubbs for three minutes.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to each of the witnesses for spending time with us today and for your testimony.

Thomas, I completely hear what you are saying. I got your message about long-term sustainable relationships that are not just about checking off boxes on a list or doing the bare minimum. I think, from my observations, that it's safe to say this can apply both to the Crown's duty and interactions with indigenous people and indigenous communities, as well as, often, the private sector's relationship with indigenous people and indigenous communities.

I wonder if you could address maybe your top three—or however you would like to explain it—specifics that either are barriers or suggestions to improve on both fronts—access to capital and capacity building with government—as well as expand on the comment you made about initiatives linking businesses and entrepreneurs with private sector businesses and private sector investment, and the importance of equity partnerships and actual ownership.

• (1740)

Mr. Thomas Benjoe: That's perfect. Thanks.

To use an example of one of the more unique business models that we currently have as an organization—and we're on the brink of hopefully securing some major renewable energy projects in Saskatchewan—we've built a limited partnership model that allows us to help lead, as FHQ Developments, the negotiations with our partners. Our partners are willing to give up 50% equity in these major projects. These are \$500-million and \$750-million projects, and they're willing to give us that equity position. Alongside that, it means that we do have to spend a great deal of time accessing the CIB, talking to NRCan and all of the set-asides that have been set up in those programs for us to access.

We have negotiated with our partners to give us access to further equity capital, and the intent here is that we now have a seat at the table. Once we have a seat at the table, we can dictate policy from a board level and now be able to say what are the economic impacts we want to see from these projects: how we want to see employment, how we want to see reinvestment and how we want to see the spend with indigenous businesses—real spend with indigenous businesses—and make sure that we set the policies on how we do that.

Only through having a major equity stake in these major assets are we going to be able to dictate the rules of the game. This would give us—indigenous communities—more power to be able to ensure that there is greater economic impact and that we are a bit more involved in the projects, and that we are building capacity and managing the maintenance of those assets, so that it's not just one big project and we get to see all this tremendous benefit and then it goes away, right?

We want to be able to continue to see that success and the maintenance of those assets ongoing. Being a part of these types of projects, especially major assets, is multi-generational wealth. On an asset for a wind turbine or a solar project, you're looking at anywhere from 25 to 40 years. That could be up to 40 years of wealth generation in cash flow going back to our communities as own-source revenue that can be used for further investment in the things we need in our communities.

That's just an example of how we've deployed a new business model to help us access capital and to see that there is multi-generational wealth. We're crossing our fingers and hoping for access to some of these projects and that they will be approved for us.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Stubbs.

Mr. Powlowski, you have three minutes.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): I want to get to Ms. Lindeman because we're both in Thunder Bay, but before that, I want to comment that I'm noticing the art in the backgrounds of several people. Mr. Benjoe and Monsieur Garon have nice pictures, which brings us to Mr. Moorhouse and his Inuit carving that is sitting right above him.

Now, whereas many artists around the world struggle to survive, Inuit artists are exceedingly well known as one of the few communities that I think can count so many successful artists who have been able to make a good life for themselves out of art. Perhaps there are some lessons there in terms of economic prosperity: It doesn't always have to come from the traditional sources.

Having said that, let me quickly go on to Ms. Lindeman. You talked about the Cromarty school here. Certainly, within both the public and the Catholic school boards, there are a lot of indigenous students. Could you tell me a little bit about how you think we can be doing better in Thunder Bay in terms of equipping indigenous students to be able to have a good life? Certainly, we both agree on the importance of education and that goal.

If you get by that quick enough, maybe we can ask Mr. Moorhouse about Inuit art. Thanks.

• (1745)

Dr. Carlana Lindeman: I'm a former teacher and principal, and I was the inspector for Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School. I know the school well.

I think there's a real focus now in many school boards and many schools to support indigenous students, which for sure wasn't there decades ago. I think the fact that we have data, that we're asking students, "what do you want, what's going to be best for you and what are the supports you need?", means that we're not making de-

isions on their behalf but having them as part of the team and better involving families, parents and extended family as well.

I think all of those things are very important, particularly with what's happening at Mattawa and the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council, and also with KiHS, the Internet high school, and the school boards. I think they have a very positive relationship, and they all have a common goal. We want these kids to succeed. We want these students to succeed.

Thank you.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Mr. Moorhouse, do you have any comment on the success of Inuit art economically?

Dr. Carlana Lindeman: That's beautiful.

Mr. Andy Moorhouse: I believe this is what you're referring to. It's locally sourced rock, locally carved by an elder, a means of passing on a tradition of knowledge, of history. One of the stories we have with this piece is that they're a family and they're working towards ensuring that they have success in the next hunt.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Powlowski and Mr. Moorhouse.

[Translation]

Mr. Garon, you have the floor for a minute and a half.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Fortune has favoured me. I will be able to ask the question that I didn't have time for earlier.

Mr. Moorhouse, you spoke about great economic successes, including Air Inuit, which you alluded to earlier. Given the circumstances and all the factors that we discussed earlier, including your geographic location, I imagine that your communities must face unfair competition of some kind.

Can you tell us about a specific project that is difficult to carry out but that has potential and might be more likely to succeed if it were located in a community in the south or in a non-indigenous community?

[English]

Mr. Andy Moorhouse: There are a lot of businesses within our communities that seem to succeed with partnership, but in order for a business to succeed, it needs the opportunity to have a partnership and the opportunity for priority of contract.

Where you don't have that support, where you have, let's say, multi-million dollar companies in the south that have the backing of banking institutions or other partnerships that they may have in the south but that do not intend to provide economic opportunity for the community they're presiding in or working in, I think that's where the challenges are. That's in general.

In a sense, it's ensuring that priority of contracts, let's say, on reserve for reserve communities or in our state ensuring that a priority of contracts is given to Nunavik Inuit enterprises or Inuit enterprises in general across the Canadian Arctic.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garon.

[*English*]

Ms. Idlout, you have 90 seconds.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Thank you so much.

I have a quick question for Thomas Benjoe, because I've really appreciated his description of that great program they had to offer.

I wonder if you have data on your success rates and whether you have an estimated number of recipients, on an annual basis, who use the programs you've described today.

• (1750)

Mr. Thomas Benjoe: In terms of data on the success of a lot of our companies, in most cases we have started our businesses with zero capital. That's where we've leveraged government funding. We continue to just reinvest more of our own capital into more businesses, which creates a greater economic impact.

When we look at our nations that are accessing our services, from hosting events to releasing communications into the communities, we're talking about tens of thousands of indigenous individuals, not just from our territory but right across Canada and internationally, who are following a lot of the strategies and programs we're developing and the partnerships we're creating. So there are a lot of people listening in, and we're quite excited about being a younger development corporation in Canada and being able to demonstrate some new ways of thinking.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, Thomas Benjoe, Andy Moorhouse and Carlana Lindeman, for your very informative presentations and for answering all of our questions. You've pointed to some of the barriers and challenges but also to some of the opportunities, and that's exactly what we're studying at the moment, so we very much appreciate your taking your time today to be with us.

We wish you all the best, and we'll continue until we put out the report. Thank you very much for your input.

To committee members, we have to be out in about seven minutes but we have some committee business to look at. We need to decide whether to adopt the subcommittee report, which will allow us to get under way for our second study.

Is there a motion from the floor on this?

Mr. Michael McLeod: Mr. Chair.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: I have a question, but Michael McLeod is going to speak. My question is probably related to his.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. McLeod.

Mr. Michael McLeod: Mr. Chair, after reading the report and looking at the text.... There was a study to look at the housing shortages; I think it was put forward by the Bloc and Madame Gill. I would like to propose changes to the text and some different wording. The original text doesn't include Métis, and I was hoping we'd be able to include some of the work that's already been done.

I provided some of the wording already.

Can I bring forward the amendment that I'd like to see?

The Chair: Please, go ahead.

Mr. Michael McLeod: The proposed new text would read, "1. Further to the motion of Tuesday, February 1, 2022, it was agreed"—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair...

[*English*]

The Chair: Just one moment, Mr. McLeod.

Monsieur Garon.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Mr. Garon.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: I wonder whether it wouldn't be more appropriate to adopt the report in camera.

The Chair: No, it's not necessary.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Okay.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. McLeod. You can continue.

Mr. Michael McLeod: My wording would be:

1. Further to the motion of Tuesday, February 1, 2022, it was agreed that the following motion replace paragraph two in the First Report from the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure: That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study on the effects of the housing shortage on Indigenous Peoples across Canada; that the committee invite the Minister of Indigenous Services, experts and government officials to examine this issue; that the committee hold a maximum of six meetings on this issue; that the study takes into consideration and builds on the evidence from the HUMA report entitled Indigenous Housing: The Direction Home (adopted on May 6, 2021), the PBO report on Urban, Rural and Northern Housing (February 11, 2021); that the committee report its findings and recommendations to the House; and that the committee request that the government table a comprehensive response to the report within a year.
2. That witness lists be made in a prioritized order and circulated between the parties.

Those are my recommendations, Mr. Chair.

• (1755)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McLeod.

Do we have support for Mr. McLeod's motion, or are there any intervenors?

Mr. Martin Shields: I ask that you call the question.

The Chair: Okay, we'll do a recorded division.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: The motion is adopted. Thank you very much, everyone.

Is the report as amended by the motion adopted?

Mr. Michael McLeod: Agreed.

Mr. Martin Shields: You have to call the question. You have to vote twice. You voted on the amendment, and now you have to vote on the amended motion.

The Clerk: Yes.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you.

The Chair: Right. That's what we're doing now.

Let's call it.

The Clerk: The vote is tied.

The Chair: As I understand it, the vote is tied. Is this one of those occasions where I cast the...?

The Clerk: Yes.

The Chair: I'm in favour of it.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The report is adopted with the amendment that we adopted before.

Thank you very much, everyone. We'll see you on Friday.

The meeting is adjourned.

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