

**KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE**

**Claims Negotiations Position Cuts**

**Committee of the Whole—2016-2017 Operating Budget Review**

**Dept. of Executive—June 2, 2016**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. As part of the mandate that we collectively approved for the 18<sup>th</sup> assembly, I understood that negotiations with Aboriginal governments to settle land rights was going to be a priority. When I look at the table here, there is actually going to be a number of positions cut in negotiations, actually three. So I am just wondering how is that consistent with the mandate that we approved? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr.Blake):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. McLeod.

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We, as I said, if it was just adding positions to settle land claims, we would have added a lot more positions, but we are taking a more focused, a new approach, and that's where my opening remarks that we identified and additional resources of \$200,000 to help with this new collaborative approach to dealing with land claims. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr.Blake):** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Any further questions, Mr. O'Reilly?

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. So looks like there's going to be four full-time positions that are lost. Can the Minister tell me whether those are staffed currently? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**MR. CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. McLeod.

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The four positions are all vacant, some of them since 2013. There is one vacant since 2010, another one vacant since 2014. So all the positions will be vacant when this comes into effect. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr.Blake):** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Any further questions, Mr. O'Reilly?

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. So can the Minister tell me whether any of those positions were actually signed to any specific negotiations tables? I'm just trying to understand whether the lack of having people, warm bodies in those seats is actually contributed to ongoing delays and negotiations. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**MR. CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. McLeod.

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There's no ongoing delays. That happened because of these vacant positions, but I'll ask through you, Mr. Chair, for the Deputy minister to go into more detail. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr.Blake):** Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Mr. Goldney.

**MR. GOLDNEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Of the four positions identified for reduction, three have been vacant for some time. As the Premier noted, one since 2010, and that was in our implementation shop, and we have certainly found ways to manage that workload without that position being filled. Another position that was vacant since 2013 just proved to be a difficult one to fill, and we have found ways to operationalize without the use of that position, so when faced with some tough questions about the level of resources, we had to be honest and say we really don't need that resource because we've been working without it for so long.

Similarly, there is a research assistant negotiator position that's more recently vacant for the last two years. It's the same scenario. We do identify one chief negotiator position for reduction that hasn't been vacant but will be as of June 10<sup>th</sup>, and we are anticipating filling that work with existing negotiators on staff in the department, so it's really about reassigning some workloads. We are not anticipating at all that shortage causing any delays.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr.Blake):** Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Anything further, Mr. O'Reilly?

**MR. O'REILLY:** I don't think anybody's actually answered the specific question I have, which is, are any of these positions that are currently vacant -- one sounds like there's an individual who is retiring -- what specific tables are they actually supporting? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**MR. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Goldney.

**MR. GOLDNEY:** The chief negotiator position that we've identified was currently, or was previously, supporting the Norman Wells self-government file and the Tulita self-government negotiations. And as I mentioned, that work has been reassigned and is supported with other negotiators now