

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE

Lands Inspections Capabilities

Committee of the Whole—2016-2017 Operating Budget Review

Dept. of Lands—June 23, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. There's a number of reductions on this page that I'm wondering about. Program management and administration is down, I don't know, maybe \$150,000. Land use administration is down over \$100,000. Resource management is down almost or over \$300,000 from last year.

What's the rationale for these reductions, and how will that impact our ability to manage lands, stuff that we've inherited under devolution? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think the total reduction was \$636,000 if I am not mistaken. It was for utilities, fuel costs for inspections program, restricted base funding for inspection response to spills. We withdrew a couple of positions. Then these commissioners senior lands officers function in headquarters, we have reduced it from five to three positions. I think that is the total of the \$636,000. Then we have one sunset of \$80,000. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the Minister refreshing my mind on some of those. What impact will it have on our ability to manage and inspect lands? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think we still will have the capacity to carry out our inspections as we have done in the past. If you recall from MACA lands days, before it was converted over, one of the questions we kept getting was the amount of inspectors we had. I think since Lands has been formed, we have -- I am not sure of the exact number. I can get them, as far as our inspector division goes. We have a fairly robust inspection division that is adequately staffed. I will confirm that information, and I will share it with committee.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. The expenditure category there, there is a significant reduction for travel, and I think the Minister may have explained that in terms of reduced fuel costs and so on. Is that the case for the reduction there? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I am going to have to apologize to Mr. O'Reilly. I didn't quite hear the question. I apologize for that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Mr. Chair. Is a reduction in the travel line below? I think the Minister talked about a reduced fuel expenditure. Is that the explanation for the reduced travel there? I guess what I am asking is, I want to make sure that our staff have the ability to travel to do the work to properly manage and inspect the lands that we have inherited. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the fuel shows up under utilities, just below travel. There was a restricted base funding for inspection response to be filled was a \$250,000 that the Member would have noted under travel. We still have a fairly healthy budget. I think there is not much happening out there on the water side of it. So inspection requirements may not be as high as they are, but we still have folks out on inspection. I think we have 28 total across the Department of Lands and all the regions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.