

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Highway Rescue Services Funding Program Review
Committee of the Whole—2016-2017 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Municipal and Community Affairs—June 24, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. And I've been listening to the discussion here. To me, so we've got a 2006 report. I'm not sure if all of the recommendations followed up. There's an amount of funding here that is made available to build capacity for these services. There's a cap of \$40,000 a year for applications. Maybe the problem is with the cap. I don't know how often the cap have been reconsidered, but there seems to be a problem here with the program, itself. And reducing the amount of money that's available does not seem to be addressing the need that's out there.

So I guess what I'm looking for is a commitment that the Minister is going to come to the committee, look at this issue, and try to find a solution. I don't think cutting money is the solution that people are looking for. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I mean, there is a reduction in this because, as I said before, it's a program that's not fully subscribed to. And we'll have to try and address that and build capacity, so those. And then, in future, if there is a need to enhance the \$185,000, then we'll consider it at the time. But, I mean, we're basing this reduction on the uptake of this program and the communities' recognition that, once they get certified or they're able to be first responders, then there's going to be more demand on this.

So the priority right now is to ensure that our communities are trained and are able to respond to any emergencies without fearing the liability that might come with it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair, I appreciate that. I guess I'll just reiterate. I think the problem is with the design of the program. If there's a \$40,000 cap and it's not fully subscribed, there's a need there, the problem is with the design of the program. And I'm just asking if the Minister will come to committee and try to work out a way to improve the services and redesign the program.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I take the Member's point. I mean, there's a discussion that we should sit down with committee and get some input from committee as to what some of their recommendations are. If there's a design of the program issue then we'll have to address that. This is an issue that's been on people's radars for a while so I think it would be prudent of us to sit down with committee, get some feedback and go away and maybe come back with a redesigned program working with committee. But I will commit to that process. Thank you, Mr. Chair.