

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Disabilities Action Plan
Committee of the Whole—2017-2018 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Health and Social Services—February 9, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: I'm happy to wait, Mr. Chair. I might have another question. Is this where there might be some discussion of the action plan on disabilities?

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, we think this is probably the right section.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister give us an update on the status of the action plan on disabilities, where we are at with it? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know I laughed, and it was funny, but just to be clear, the reason that we are not 100 per cent sure it is this section is because there is no budget for the work that we are doing. We are doing it with staff who actually cross a number of divisions and sections, but this seems as good a section as any, given that a number of the staff who are helping with us are in this division.

Mr. Chair, I will admit that I did not anticipate that Health and Social Services would be the first department up when it comes to budget discussions. We haven't usually been the first department, so I did intend to send a letter to committee. We are actually in the process of drafting it. We were supposed to be done the plan by the end of March, and in discussion with some of our stakeholders and our advisory panel; what has been suggested to me is that it is more important that we get this plan right as opposed to right now. We have struggled to sort of get agreement on some of the initial information that we have been pulling together.

I think it is going along well. It's just slower than anticipated. We won't be done on March 31. I was going to come to committee and ask if we could have a briefing, just to give everybody an update, but we anticipate it will probably take a couple more months, probably three to four more months to get to the point where all the stakeholders are satisfied with the project and the product, before I'm prepared to come and have the discussion with committee on where we are, and where we go next. My apologies. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the response from the Minister. Can he, though, provide some assurance that there have been consultations, particularly with the Council for the Disabled? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can confirm that absolutely. The executive director is the chair of the reference panel for the NGOs that we have put together. The executive director is the chair. We have been working with them. They are one of the groups that suggested to us that we need to make sure we get this right as opposed to right now, so we are working with them and even more so as we move forward into the next step, which is going past the inventory and into the action plans.