

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Arctic Energy Alliance Programming
Committee of the Whole—2017-2018 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Infrastructure—February 21, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm looking at page 234, and there's a number of energy programs and policy development that are not being renewed this year; Community LED Swap-out Program, Community Government Solar, Condo Corporation Biomass, Energy Information and Awareness, I could go on. Can someone from the department explain why these programs are being cut or sunsetted? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So a number of those projects are either sunsetting because the work is done or that the funding has been rolled into another program going forward. I have some specific examples here that I think were raised. The Community Corporation Biomass Program. There was \$50,000 there and we had initiated that program with Arctic Energy Alliance to see if there were ways for condominium corporations to access biomass funding to do biomass upgrades. Our understanding from Arctic Energy Alliance is that there was very low uptake on that program, even though they actively promoted it, so that particular line item is sunset. However, the funding criteria has now been expanded under the Commercial Energy Conservation and Efficiency Program so condo corporations in the future can come forward and apply for funding through that program. So that's one example I think that was raised.

The other one I think was raised was the Community LED Swap-out Program. I believe that was the -- bear with me, Mr. Chair. That was the program similar to what was done with the compact fluorescent light bulbs a number of years ago. So this was an initiative to promote deployment and use of LED light bulbs. So the program at the time, this was using that incremental funding that we got through the Low Water to provide Arctic Energy Alliance to do promotional programs. It was to purchase and distribute LED light bulbs to all of the thermal community homeowners and to exchange for incandescent and other energy-efficient light bulbs, and that program has now been completed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So although the programs, some of these may have been completed, I think there's still a big need out there. I know of a condo just literally almost next door to where I live on Forest Drive that was looking for assistance with putting in a wood-pellet boiler. So it sounds like there's still a need for some of these programs. You know, have we replaced all of the compact fluorescent or old-style light bulbs throughout the Northwest Territories? It just sounds like that there's a number of needs still here to continue these programs.

So can someone from the department confirm that there's still a need for some of these programs and it's just that they're being sunset because we've decided that we don't want to fund them anymore? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister, can we get confirmation? Minister?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So there's a number of things going on. We've got the Energy Strategy that's going across the Northwest Territories. As most Members know, we have three communities left, with Hay River, Fort Simpson, and Behchoko to go, that are going to feed into all of this. We're trying to pull a whole bunch of information together.

Actually, I guess another comment on the Energy Strategy: going around to the communities, there's been a bunch of feedback from Aboriginal groups, community organizations, and individuals on this particular program, on Arctic Energy Alliance. We want, at some point here, to have a review and have a look at how we're going to try to realign some of that stuff with that program. Some of the program is working; some isn't working. As the deputy just said, some of the programs have been completed. So we want to have a look at how we're going to enhance and streamline that to make it a more efficient organization going forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So I'm glad to hear that the departments or department, whatever, is getting some feedback on Arctic Energy Alliance. That's great, but it sounds like this is Aurora College all over again, where we're making a bunch of cuts to programs without having a strategy in place. Is that the case here? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. These aren't cuts, these are sunsets. This was a one-time funding from the Low Water Initiative in the previous Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So I understand from what the Minister said that these programs are being sunset. There's still a need for funding, and that's why the Regular MLAs have asked for additional funding for Arctic Energy Alliance. Unfortunately, we're not going to get it from the current position of Cabinet and the Minister, but there's obviously still a need for these programs.

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

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I've stated, we have the Energy Strategy that's going around; they're feeding information back to the department, not just on climate change and carbon tax but also Arctic Energy Alliance. We've committed that we want to do a review of Arctic Energy Alliance. As I said, some programs have fulfilled themselves and been quite successful. Things like the condo one that the

Member has brought up, it's been actually moved to another line item there where people can still access that. If his particular neighbour is interested in doing something there, there is actually money left in this year's budget if they wanted to get on it right away to access that fund, but other condo people can still apply under a different section. We want to do a review of this and make sure that we are spending our money wisely and into programs and services that will benefit residents in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.