

**KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE**  
**Cuts in Advance of Operational Review**  
**Committee of the Whole—2017-2018 Operating Budget Review**  
**Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources—March 1, 2017**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is the area that was of greatest concern for me, as I mentioned in my opening remarks. On page 69, you can see that the positions that are being eliminated in corporate management. There are four of them here in headquarters. Can someone from the department tell me what the titles of these four positions are? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Ms. Craig.

**MS. CRAIG:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the time that we came forward with the business plan and the main estimates, we had identified four positions. Since that time, we have had some natural attrition. The only position that has actually been eliminated is the director position. We had the incumbent retire, and with the amalgamation, we only need one director.

The other positions that were identified were of a policy or communications nature, but due to attrition, we have not had to affect any employees or eliminate any positions. We are taking this time because we have met the fiscal responsibility of reducing the budget. We are taking this time to do an assessment of the upcoming workload and the capacity of the staff that we do have within not only corporate services but also within the department to respond to the upcoming priorities and initiatives. When we are settled and we have finished our functional review, we will come back to cabinet with an information item to address the FTE changes to reflect how we actually land; but at this point in time, Mr. Chair, we have actually only reduced one FTE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. Craig. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Great to hear that we are going to have a functional review, but are the figures in the main estimates correct then in terms of the active position reductions and the reductions in, it looks like it is the corporate services function within this section? Are those the actual figures or have they been changed in some way? Thanks Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Ms. Craig.

**MS. CRAIG:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The numbers on page 69 where it shows headquarters going from 30 positions to 26 positions, that's where we will come back when we are settled with an information update to address the FTEs. While we have met the fiscal, the monetary changes, we have not affected those other three positions that we originally targeted.

For right now, our FTE count is less than the number of FTEs that we have, but we will make that correction. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson):** Thank you, Ms. Craig. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. If I wasn't confused before, I certainly am now. What is the right number then for active positions for headquarters on page 69 for 2017-18? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Right now, the correct number is 26, from 30 to 26; and as Ms. Craig said, once we do the work and functional review, then we may come back again, but from the purpose of this exercise, the number is 26. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I guess what I'm hearing then is that positions are being cut in the budget. The funding is being cut in the budget, and they're going to do some sort of a functional review. They may come back. The Minister might come back at some point during the 2017-18 fiscal year for supplementary appropriation for additional positions. Is that what I'm hearing? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, while we wouldn't necessarily have to come back with a supplementary, we would just come back with an information item as to which positions may have changed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Of course, I've never seen one of these information items, what it might look like. Is the Minister saying then that they might find the resources internally then to fill another position or two? Or how would the new money be found if the department does this functional review and they want to have more capacity? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we would look internally. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I guess, once again we have a situation here where positions are being eliminated before there is actually a plan in place, the functional review, so to speak. It follows this pattern of the fiscal strategy driving cuts in the budget again rather than looking at the workload that the department has to deliver on.

I have talked about the workload. There are five pieces of legislation the Minister has said he is bringing forward. We have air quality regulations, that are now behind schedule; the Bathurst caribou range plan; climate change work; fire management; a number of other initiatives that the department has going on. The workload assessment, the functional review has not been carried out, yet we are eliminating the positions. It just does not make any sense. I don't know if I am going to get any further response from the Minister, but I am open to hearing it if he has any further justification for cutting

these positions. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Yes, gladly, Mr. Chair, thank you. We had a plan. Because of attrition we have eliminated four positions, and that gives us an opportunity to work on a new plan, recognizing some of the workload that ENR is going to be facing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the response from the Minister, but I just do not think that these are wise reductions at a time when the department has a lot to deliver on in terms of its mandate, the mandate commitments that have been made, the announcements that the Minister has made. I just think that legislation and policy work, programs and services are going to continue to be delayed and not to the standard that our public deserves, so I continue to disagree with these cuts. I don't think I have anything further to say other than these are very serious concerns for me. I think they are shared by most or all of the Regular MLAs, and we just do not see how the department is going to be able to deliver on its mandate. Thank you, Mr. Chair.