

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I will try to keep my comments on some of the higher levels and some of the issues that maybe some of my colleagues have not covered so far.

Earlier today in the House, there was a lot of discussion around climate change and carbon pricing. This department plays a really crucial role in moving forward on those issues, and I believe they actually have the expertise in-house to do some work on this. I want to make sure that that stays within the department, but I just don't sense that there is any urgency on these issues with our government. I expect that ENR is going to play a critical role in these areas, particularly with regard to greenhouse gas emissions reductions and that there is some expertise there on carbon pricing, as well.

We have made some good progress on transboundary agreements, but, of late, this seems to have slipped. Earlier, I think it was last week, in the House I talked about this and asked questions of the Minister. We want to make sure that we actually continue with the implementation of those agreements and that the remaining agreements are negotiated in a timely fashion. Those are very important arrangements for people who live downstream, and that was the whole premise of the integrated resource management system that was negotiated as part of the Dene-Metis land rights agreements.

One of my colleagues spoke about the cuts to source water protection. We have one department, MACA, that does a lot of work on trying to get communities up to speed and ready to make sure that their residents have safe water. We have another department that is actually cutting funding to protect source water. This is just not consistent, not good.

The one reduction here that is of the biggest concern for me is loss of four positions at headquarters in the corporate management part of the budget. These are positions that relate to policy, legislation, and communications. Some of them may be vacant, but perhaps they should have been filled because we are already behind schedule on the legislation that this department was supposed to be bringing forward. The Minister talked about these in his opening remarks. This department has a huge amount on its plate in terms of legislative change, policy initiatives -- I mentioned climate change -- and ongoing programming, like the development of a Bathurst caribou range plan, fire management. Air regulations are now behind schedule. Without that capacity, I just don't see how the department is going to be able to deliver on the commitments that are part of our mandate, part of priorities, and part of the departmental business plan. With those four positions being lost in corporate management here, in Yellowknife, I just don't understand how the department is going to be able to stay on schedule.

I will also have some questions around the status of the Wildlife Act and Regulations -- this is sort of the second phase of those regulations -- the expansion of

the water quality monitoring network that we partially funded last year, and a few other matters as we go through, but that is it for now. Thanks, Mr. Chair.