

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Departmental Amalgamation
Committee of the Whole—2017-2018 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Executive and Indigenous Affairs—March 2, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I was not sure exactly where to ask this question, and it's partly a product of the merger of these two departments. In the business plan for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations it shows a staffing reduction of four positions from 2016-17 to 2017-18 in Yellowknife headquarters. I am wondering if someone can explain to me how that shows up in this amalgamation of these two departments and what those four positions were all about. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. COURTOREILLE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The four positions referenced by the Member were internal transfers to the Department of Finance as part of the shared corporate service amalgamation. Thank you, sir.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So can I just get a little bit of detail, then, on what sort of functions, what kind of jobs, did those people do? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. COURTOREILLE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The four positions referenced by the Member were the direct of policy, planning, and communications; a senior communications advisor; a financial planning and budget analyst; and a records ATIPP coordinator position. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Did any of those positions have any roles to play with regard to negotiations? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. They provided general support. They are still available to provide that support as part of the shared services. The more detailed policy, we kept an analyst position in the department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I guess the point here, though, is that these positions were in DAIR and now they are going to be cut, so there is some loss of corporate knowledge and institutional history and so on. Were all those positions staffed, or were they vacant? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to clarify that they were not cut. They were transferred to shared services, and all four positions were staffed. Thank

you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks for that clarification. I guess my concern and point is that those individuals now have to serve more people. There are more people. It's an amalgamated department, so their efforts are going to have to be spread over a greater number of initiatives and so on. I suspect some of that includes support for negotiations. Is that the case? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. COURTOREILLE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to clarify, the four positions are really just a smaller group that has joined a much larger group to provide corporate services support to the Executive and Indigenous Affairs Department as well as the Department of Finance. Thank you, sir.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Well, I still remain concerned that we've got the smaller group of people serving maybe four departments, or what used to be four departments, now, and I think this is probably going to take away some focus and support for negotiations at the end of the day. I would be curious to hear whether anybody has anything further to add to that. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. COURTOREILLE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to provide a little bit further background to my previous response. The shared corporate service group has a total of 28 positions. As the Member identified, there are four coming over from Aboriginal Affairs but we also have four positions coming over from the Executive and 13 coming over from the Department of Human Resources joining seven positions already in place from the Department of Finance. So as I mentioned earlier, those 28 positions are really providing corporate services now to those two amalgamated departments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think I understand it a little better. So all of those people coming together to serve what used to be four departments, were positions cut within some of the other departments that they used to serve or were they all direct staff transfers into this shared corporate services unit? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're dealing with the Department of Indigenous Affairs, and the four people who went over were all staff. We feel that we will get better service; we will get better advice, because with a very small unit there are days when people are sick or people are on vacation and have nobody to cover. With the corporate services section, we will have more service, better service, and there will always be somebody there to provide us with that service. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'll try one more time. So in forming this corporate services unit that's now going to serve what used to be four departments, now two, all of those people who used to be in their individual departments, were there any positions cut in forming this shared corporate services unit? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Mr. Courtoreille.

MR. COURTOREILLE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and yes, just to confirm, there were reductions identified in the 2017-2018 Main estimates for the Department of Finance for the shared corporate service group. Two are going to be recommended for the 2017-18 year under the Department of Finance. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I appreciate the response and I'll just go on record again as having some concerns about the loss of capacity for this important work, and I think it may affect our capacity and ability to continue to negotiate. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Would the Premier like to respond?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can reassure the Member that we believe that our services will be enhanced and the advice will improve to allow us to go forward and fulfil our priorities for this department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.