

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. While we are on the subject of the Public Utilities Board, what is the long-term plan for this board? I know that fairly significant and prescriptive policy direction was just issued by Cabinet to the Public Utilities Board. Is it the plan of Cabinet to get rid of this board? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is no plan to change the Public Utilities Board. What the Member is referring to is what the Public Utilities Board is doing its job. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that answer, but it was fairly prescriptive policy direction in terms of items that are going to come before it. Why bother having a Public Utilities Board if we are going to issue that sort of direction? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We are just following the procedures as laid out in the mandate of the Public Utilities Board, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I am not sure that was actually an answer, but I will try maybe a different way. There was very prescriptive direction in terms of how the Public Utilities Board is to deal with electricity rates that really limit the board's ability to exercise its jurisdiction. I am just curious to know if we are going to continue to do that Public Utilities Board, why bother having a board? Just get rid of it, and you can decide internally how to set the rates through ownership of NTPC or whatever. Why bother having a Public Utilities Board if we are going to continue to issue that detailed prescriptive policy direction? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There was some previous direction with regard to rate rebalancing, which adds significant negative impacts on rate payers in some of the communities, so it was felt that it was in the best interest of all to lighten the impact. Certainly, if committee feels we should look at getting rid of the PUB, if we get that recommendation from committee, we will look at it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Just to be clear, I am not advocating doing that, but once again, the Regular MLAs were not told about this. Our advice was not sought. This

was not brought before standing committee. It was something that Cabinet went off and did on their own. What is the future of this board? Is the Premier prepared to bring some sort of an options paper or start to engage the appropriate standing committee on this before issuing further policy direction to the PUB? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I said, if the committee wants us to change the operation of the Public Utilities Board, we would be prepared to look at it if the committee recommends it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. That is great that the Premier is looking to the committee for direction, but Cabinet itself has already changed the way the PUB operates by issuing this binding policy direction without bothering to consult the standing committee. Will the Premier commit to consulting with the standing committee before issuing further direction to the PUB? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe I responded to that question that the procedures are in place. If the committee wants us to change it, we would be pleased to do it if the committee make a recommendation to do that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I will try one more time. Before the Premier or Cabinet or the Minister responsible issues further policy direction to the Public Utilities Board, will the minister consult with the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We would be pleased to respond to recommendation from committee on that matter. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I can see I am not going to get anywhere with this because the Premier does not want to answer the question. Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is all I have.