

**KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE**

**MOTION 24-18(3):  
REVOCATION OF APPOINTMENT OF THE HONOURABLE MEMBER FOR GREAT  
SLAVE TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. As I said earlier, I have tried to choose my words very carefully. I take the issue of removal of a Cabinet Minister very seriously.

While I personally like the Minister and often agree with him, this motion is about leadership and priorities. I have no doubt that this Minister works very, very hard in managing one of the largest and most important departments. The Minister has led some very important initiatives, and I give him full credit for the accomplishments that he will no doubt raise. I also find the Minister to be very receptive and responsive to the numerous constituent issues I have raised with him.

When all of us were fresh and new, we outlined our priorities. My three were reducing the cost of living; getting our resource management house in order, which is largely what I talked about in my last statement on the previous motion; and healthy communities, with a focus on children and housing. I want to stress my stated priority on children.

I sat in on the briefing done by the Office of the Auditor General on Child and Family Services last week. I was expecting to hear that we had made some progress, even if it was minor, on improving these areas. Mr. Speaker, I have sat through a lot of briefings over the last three years, but to say this one was disturbing would be an understatement. I am not going to repeat the audit findings here, but I just don't accept that we could have failed our children and families so badly. How could things possibly get worse in four years, under the same high-energy Minister?

While I have heard some explanations from the Minister, and he has plans now in place for improvements, what I haven't heard, and what some of my constituents haven't heard, is some ownership and responsibility, and perhaps most importantly, an apology. We have collectively failed the most vulnerable people in our society, and for that, I am truly sorry. I am also willing to learn and to take action.

I have thought long and hard about how and why we have ended up in this situation and what needs to be done if the ultimate objective is to improve our services and supports for children and families. We don't want to lose any more of our staff who work in these difficult and challenging services. They, too, need and deserve our support.

I accept that the Minister has said that the right plans, systems, and resources are in place or about to be put in place to allow us to start to head in the right direction. If so, then the question is whether a change in Ministers would make any difference. I have no doubts about the passion of the current Minister on Child and Family Services and the other challenges within his department, but the path for improvement seems to be set in motion no matter who is at the helm.

I don't blame the Minister for where we got with Child and Family Services. This motion

is not about blame, but leadership and priorities. I believe that more resources, energy, and focus can and should have been devoted to Child and Family Services. For example, supplementary appropriations to carry out the much-needed overall needs assessment or more staff and training. I have no doubt and have seen that this Minister is not shy and has the ability to extract funds from the Financial Management Board with good business cases. However, I don't understand why this wasn't done sooner with Child and Family Services.

In my view, this all boils down to the priorities of Cabinet as a whole. I have openly disagreed with Cabinet's priorities from the very beginning of this Assembly. Clearly, the focus of Cabinet has been on its fiscal strategy above all else, at the expense of the needs of our residents, including our children and families most in need. The focus on managing expenses, cutting programs and services to fund infrastructure, large projects, departmental amalgamations, and a looming labour dispute with an unfair wage offer have created a distraction from the real and immediate needs of our residents. This difference in priorities has sapped enormous amounts of our time and energy in this Assembly. It has created a huge gulf between Regular MLAs and Cabinet and strained consensus government to the breaking point.

As I support this motion, it is not about the performance of the Minister. He is good and perhaps our best Minister. My vote is about leadership and priorities. Leadership is about taking responsibility, and that includes making apologies. I have raised the issue of priorities, and in my view, Cabinet's priorities are not my priorities and have not brought the attention or focus that we need on Child and Family Services, economic diversification, housing, climate change, and the other pressing needs of our residents. I believe that our best chance at resetting Cabinet's priorities, and that includes greater attention and focus on improving Child and Family Services, is by supporting this motion. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.