

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Integrated Shared Services Accountability and Evaluation
Committee of the Whole—2019-2020 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Finance—March 6, 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. In the main estimates, on 149 is the number of active positions, and it only increases by eight people between the two years. Is this where this integrated shared services systems unit or whatever it's called, ISSS, is being moved into? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Deputy Minister Stewart.

MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, this is the information systems shared services unit, so this is the initiative that we have talked to the committee about, of basically consolidating all of the resources from across government into one unit to do information systems development. Really, the genesis of that was a review that was done and a recognition that there is an awful lot of this work being done in government; often it was not being coordinated particularly well, and you had different departments doing different things, and that led to duplication and those sorts of things. The other thing that came out of the review was just the ability to take advantage for career pathing and training and to learning from each other, so the decision was to set up this shared services unit and have a governance model around it that would keep departments getting the services they need. Really, it reflects the demand for an increasing number of services online and those sorts of things, so we are really structuring ourselves to be able to move in a much more major way into that area. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Stewart. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Okay. I accept that the work was done. Why, the active positions, is there only an increase of eight? I thought there were like 78 people or something who were being moved from different departments into finance. How many people are moving into finance as a result of the establishment of this new unit? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Deputy Minister Stewart.

MR. STEWART: Thanks, Mr. Chair. The main estimates reflect the restatement from various departments, but I can provide for the Member a little detail behind that. Sixty-nine of those positions, of the 88 positions for 2019-2020, are transfers from other departments, so it reflects that consolidation. Eleven positions were existing in finance because the office of CIO was already there. As well, we had a couple of these types of position in the department already. There was one position that was re-profiled from existing resources to create another project management position. There was initiative funding for four positions that related to making sure that we provide the level of support we need to departments. Then, finally, there was another initiative that was not related to the consolidation but was related to providing e-service, where we are setting up a small service unit in Fort Smith that will provide I call it "virtual GSO-type service," so

that people who are trying to do online services can actually reach out and phone somebody to get help, if they need, for service delivery across the GNWT that is done on an e-service basis. That is being set up this year, as well. That is where you get to the 88 total, so 69 come from other departments and then some from finance and a little bit from initiative funding. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Stewart. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So where are these 69 people actually going to be housed, which building? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Deputy Minister Stewart.

MR. STEWART: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think the initial plan is they will be in three different locations. Some will be in the gallery building. There was already a shared service unit for Lands, ENR, and ITI, and we will use the space that was there. Some will be in the Laing Buildings, where the office of the CIO was. There may be some swapping out of space. Then the third sort of focal point will be in Northwest Tower, what I affectionately call "the green building." There is some space that we were able to get through infrastructure for a third spot there. Obviously, ideally, we would like to have everybody come together, but this is a rather large unit, so many departments have multiple locations, and we will just have to work with this for the time being, until we can maybe consolidate into a single location. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Stewart. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So do all of these people move on April 1st? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Deputy Minister Stewart.

MR. STEWART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It probably won't happen right on April 1st. I think we are doing a staging plan now. We certainly want them all in place by June 1st, but office moves and those sorts of things, as you know, are a little bit complicated. We are getting down into that detailed office layout. We kind of have a rough sense of where everyone is going at this point, and then we will start to get that detailed planning, but we do not want to get too far into the fiscal year without having everybody in the locations they need to get to. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister O'Reilly -- or Deputy Minister Stewart. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I am not sure if that is a promotion or a demotion. I know there are some people who would like to demote me here.

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MR. O'REILLY: More seriously, what systems do we have in place to evaluate outcomes here? I am not talking about convenience for people who work for the government. I am talking about client service. How is the effectiveness of this move, massive move, of resources into Finance going to be evaluated? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Deputy Minister Stewart.

MR. STEWART: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Part of the process that we are going through and one of the first things that we will be working on is we have a rough sense of what should be in an accountability framework and, certainly, departments are very interested to make sure that they don't lose any of the service that they are getting now. We are trying to look at this on a broader sector basis so that we can include accountability around the other components of information systems, but also that information technology and information management as well to come up with a sector-level set of indicators, but we will absolutely have a specific set of metrics that we will be tracking to make sure that this is working in terms of the same level of service, if not improved service, and better consistency, and those sorts of things, and then reporting out on the progress they are making. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Stewart. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Can I get a commitment, then, out of the Minister? Because I don't think I have actually seen this evaluation framework or accountability framework or whatever the department wants to call it. Can I get a commitment out of the Minister to share that with the appropriate standing committee? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: It's not like we're trying to make work, or anything like that.

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HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: No, I know, I know. Everybody heard me because the mic was on. I was just saying that this whole exercise we are going through is not a make-work project. It is just that we are trying to improve services across the Northwest Territories to the public and to our GNWT employees. So going back to the Member's question, I will commit to sharing the information with the appropriate committee. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, I guess some of the questions I have are, I remain to be convinced that this is actually going to improve services, but can the Minister commit to providing even an interim report before the end of this Assembly to the standing committee on how this is working out? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Like I said before, this is hoping to improve services. I mean, we can't predetermine the outcome and condemn it to failure before it has even gotten off the ground, but what I can commit to do to the Member, the Members -- not the Member, the Members -- is provide them an update when we come to our May/June session, because I think we will have a pretty good indication then of how the move is going and an early indication of some of the improvements that are bound to happen. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister McLeod. I will allow one more, if

there is any. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, with my five seconds. I guess I am just a bit surprised, more than a bit surprised, that there is no accountability framework, no evaluation framework for this now. We are talking about moving 69 people around GNWT into the Department of Finance without an accountability framework, a way of measuring the success of this, so I am more than worried about this. I will wait and see what the Minister is able to provide to standing committee in terms of the evaluation framework and then in the interim report, but I guess I have heard concerns from constituents as well about this. Thanks, Mr. Chair.