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**Executive and Indigenous Affairs**  
**Committee of the Whole—2019-2020 Operating Budget Review**  
**Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs – March 4, 2020**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. So, this, I think, is part of Executive and Indigenous affairs, where federal engagement is found. I'm just wondering, do we still retain a lobbyist firm in Ottawa? That was something that was done in the last Assembly, and I just want to know if that's the case. We have some kind of retainer with some firm, and what it's costing us. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. If Members could, speak up a little louder. It's hard to hear you. Madam Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was trying to figure out what we were paying for it. We do still have a director of public affairs, I believe is the position, a deputy secretary for public affairs. Madam Chair, I do want to say that, when I first became the Premier of this government, I questioned and said, "Why do we have a person in Ottawa? We don't need a person in Ottawa. We need jobs in the North." I'm a huge advocate of jobs in the North. However, in this case, I have learned the vital necessity of having somebody in Ottawa. It's one position. In fact, it might be going down to a part-time position now. That person is on the ground. They are working with the federal departments. They are getting the information that isn't in the news. It's invaluable, that position. They not only provide the services what's up, what might be coming down the windpipe. If I give direction, they are in those departments. They are looking to lobby for us. They also have a space for us. Oftentimes, when we go to the federal government, we need to have office space. That space is open to all of my Cabinet Ministers. Other organizations have used it. It's a great place that represents the Northwest Territories, has a footprint there. I believe it was costing about \$120,000 a year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I think the Premier misunderstood my question. Maybe that's because I was speaking too quietly. I'm asking if we have a federal lobbyist firm, a company that does a registered federal lobbyist in Ottawa. Do we still retain those services? Thanks Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Madam Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have been corrected, and I take the numbers. That would be the global affairs, the organization called. That is where the \$120,000 goes. They are not lobbyists, Madam Chair. They are to give us strategic advice. They've helped in other ways, as well. I do know that they actually provided some communication support to me, as well, but they are actually to tell us what's happening and they help our lobbying efforts. They are not our lobbyists. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Well, I'm sure they are registered on the federal lobbyists registry, but I don't want to continue this. We're still paying \$120,000 to some folks in Ottawa.

I want to ask the Minister, in the last government, the Regular MLAs, we never got to meet ever with federal Ministers when they came here for visits. I don't think there have been a lot of visits so far, but there were NWT days in the past where a whole bunch of MLAs went to Ottawa and did lobbying. Would this Minister look at the idea or the issue of Regular MLAs actually getting to meet with federal Ministers when they come here? We're not a party system, but sometimes it's important that we have an opportunity or that they have an opportunity to hear what other elected officials say beyond just the Ministers themselves. It's something I want to plant that seed with the Premier and get her to think about that. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Madam Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was trying to think. I do believe that in the last Assembly, actually, I did bring down Members with me. I'm trying to think. The Status of Women, I'm pretty sure, but maybe I can be corrected, but I'm pretty sure that Regular Member actually did meet and take part in meetings, as well. I'm not averse to it. However, I do need to say that, when federal Ministers come to the Northwest Territories, I wish it was on our agenda. It is not on our agenda. It is on their agenda. Oftentimes, I've had trouble getting my own Cabinet Ministers into those meetings. Oftentimes, I have trouble getting myself into those meetings, as the Premier of the Northwest Territories. I will carry those words forward. I am sure the federal government is hearing. They tend to listen when their name is called, but, again, I can't commit because they are not my planned trips. They are the federal government's planned trips. If we have a planned trip and we invite them and they come and then we set the agenda, then, Madam Chair, I would be more open to that because it would be our agenda. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm just trying to plant the seed now because, certainly, I never got to meet a federal Minister in the last Assembly. I had a strong interest in a number of issues but was never invited to meet with federal Ministers. As an example, the leader of the Green Party, and I'm not a member of the Green Party, she came to Yellowknife. I got her in to speak to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment. That's the kind of doors that I think we should look at be opening for each other. I don't want you to just work with the governing party. There are other parties. It's a minority government. It's really important that we're going to work with all the parties that are in Ottawa

I want to move on, though, to a different topic if I can, Madam Chair, and it's about the negotiations with Indigenous governments. I see from the Minister's opening remarks that

\$495,000 is being sunset, and that was money that was used to access third-party negotiation facilitation services to assist in finalization of self-government agreements. In the last Assembly, there was one initialling of a self-government agreement. That's the only progress that was made in the last Assembly. Were these services actually accessed? Were they used? What was actually accomplished? We only had one agreement in principle in the last Assembly. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Madam Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There was a commitment in the last government, I believe, by the Premier. What I heard, I'm going off of Member's words, is that the Premier had committed to resolving all the self-government agreements and the land claim agreements. Again, that's hearsay. I think, in the last Assembly, a push to try to accommodate that is that we did bring in a whole bunch of facilitators to do that. It wasn't proven to be as effective, Madam Chair, so this money is sunsetting off of it. Sometimes, facilitation is important so, Madam Chair, right now, I've met with one Indigenous government that is wanting to have a facilitator, an expert facilitator. It's in our priorities, as well. We are committed to providing that internally at this point, until we look at our priorities. I'm not averse to it, but I'm also not willing to throw money out the window. If it's desired by the Indigenous governments, if it's close and it will provide success, then we should be open to looking at it, but we shouldn't be just throwing money out the window if there's no success. It's about measurable outcomes, again. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I agree it's about outcomes, and there really weren't a lot from the last Assembly, just in terms of negotiations. I guess what I'm hearing now is that there are negotiations that are continuing, but people come to the table and they say, "I don't have a new mandate. I'm still operating under the old mandate that was given in the last Assembly." I don't know what's happened at the tables, but it doesn't sound like there's very much. When are our negotiators going to get new mandates, a different approach, more willingness to work together in implementing the existing agreements and finalizing the ones that are out there? When are these new mandates going to come to the negotiators? If we need new negotiators, are those changes going to be made, as well? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Madam Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We have made a commitment in this government to look at the mandates and negotiations. How we move forward to that, I think we've put it out there that that would be within a joint committee, to do that work. I'm open to that, as well. However, I do want to say that I think there's a misperception. Negotiations are still going on. They've been going on. It's not that they have zero mandate, Madam Chair. It's that they have a mandate that says, for example, it might say, you can go into, there are three categories: land, royalties, and money. Often, Indigenous governments pick and choose

amongst that, and so, when they come and if we say, as Cabinet, that we will give this much land, and the negotiators have broached that, and then the Indigenous government says, "But we want more, of everything," then it has to come back through Cabinet. When we're talking money, nothing can be done at that level without coming through FMB, Financial Management Board. That is good practice. We're not just throwing money out and saying, "Go ahead; spend millions," and if they ask for \$50 billion, go ahead. There has to be some accountability, Madam Chair. They already do have mandates to move forward in the negotiations; it's only if they exceed that, then they bring it forward, but we are willing to look at our mandate negotiations in that joint committee as we move forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.