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Post Devolution Land Management and Budgeting
Committee of the Whole—2017-2018 Operating Budget Review
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MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I guess I will wade into this. Be careful what you ask for because we saw with some of the other departmental amalgamations that have been put forward that, in my humble opinion, they were not evidence-based and they are not zero-based budgeting. In any event, I think we have to be very careful.

You have separate pieces of legislation that deal with land and water, and I think that that is just a historical artifact of the last manager, which was the federal government, so you have to be very careful thinking about how you are going to merge those two responsibilities. Not to say that it can't be coordinated better, and I think we have already got some examples in terms of the cross-appointment of inspectors, and those guys work very hard at their job. We want to make sure that they are properly supported.

I do want to talk just briefly about what my colleague, the MLA for Sahtu, touched on, the declining corporate management dollars in the budget for Lands. We got \$26 million up front to look at transition costs of us taking over these responsibilities. That is almost the entire annual budget of the Department of Lands. Then we got another \$65 million a year to administer land and waters. Look, there are lots of start-up costs. We are learning and trying to feel our way. That is great.

Has the Minister or his department or our government ever looked at the money that we got from devolution and whether we are actually using and spending it all on resource management? Or are we diverting it for other purposes? Is that what we are starting to see happen here now? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to think that the government has been a good steward of the monies we have received. As I mentioned at the outset and has been repeated several times, this is a very new department and, as we move forward, inevitably there were costs in combining to two corporate cultures that existed previously. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, I sort of expected to hear that. I guess, even before I became an MLA, this was a concern that I raised with devolution, that there needed to be a time, you know, maybe after five years or even three years or something, to start to look at the implementation of devolution and how it has actually worked out.

This Department of Lands is a creature of devolution, quite frankly. A piece was taken from MACA and a few other little bits thrown together, but I think we need to start to think about evaluating how devolution has actually gone. Certainly, it was a concern that

I raised even before I was an MLA, about making sure that the money that we actually got under devolution was actually spent on resource management and not diverted for other purposes.

I have even suggested to the Auditor General's staff that this is something that they should consider looking at, that these are new responsibilities we have inherited; are we doing the best that we possibly can? I am going to leave it at that, though, for now, Mr. Chair, because I will have some other questions when we get into some other parts of the budget. I am not convinced that we are doing as well as we could or should and as our residents deserve. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I don't think, Mr. Chair, I really have anything to add. I think we are making efficient use of the resources we did receive, but we are several years in. I know in other portions of devolution and things will be looked at after five years. It may be wise to see if we have properly transitioned from what we had before to what we have now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.