

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Main Estimates 2020-2021
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MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I know it has been raised in this House by members of the public that sometimes the turnaround in the rental office doesn't always meet people's expectations. Has there been any assessment of the workload of that office and the resources that they have available? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do know that those numbers, the lag time between the filing of an application and the hearing date has been continuously dropping, and indeed, I believe as of February 2020, it was roughly at five to seven weeks, which is an improvement over the last few years, certainly. Some of the initiatives that were undertaken in order to get there were around the fact that they do not need to conduct in-person hearings, and that certainly made it a lot faster. There has also been an attempt to increase the staffing, although I don't know that we are quite yet at two rental officers, fully staffed, at this point. Though, I can certainly confirm whether or not we have achieved that goal. Again, there is always going to be a need to improve those wait times. Five to seven weeks is still a fairly significant time, whether you are a landlord or a tenant. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes. I am looking at page 286, and I see that, 2018-2019, there was actually \$292,000 spent in the office, and the budget for 2020-2021 is only \$238,000, so there might have been some extra money spent in the one year. Can I get an explanation of what might, on the surface, look like a downward trend in resourcing? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know there is some variance as a result of the UNW collective bargaining, but if I might, I'm going to ask the director of finance if there is any further information that we can provide to the Member, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm not sure I'm the director of finance.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Sorry. Ms. Bolstad.

MS. BOLSTAD: Thank you, Madam Chair. There has been no reduction in resources to the rental office. The variance there really is just some higher contract spending that occurred in the 2018-2019 fiscal years, and we had a similar trend in 2019-2020, as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Ms. Bolstad. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess some of this goes back to in previous business plans when we were doing them in that way. We actually had some performance indicators, some way of judging how resourcing levels affected the level of service. We don't have that for this particular service and entity. At some point, we're going to have to look at how the engaging, monitoring, and access to services and turnaround service standards, times, whatever, is measured in resourcing is appropriately allocated. I will take the Minister's word at it for now. The wait times have come down. They probably still need to come down further. That's all I've got. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. We certainly can provide the metrics in terms of the reduction in wait times. There have been reductions. I'm looking back to 2017-2018, and it's been by 22 percent the one year and then to 29 percent after that. The wait times there are only one metric. That is influenced by the fact that there are now two part-time rental officers hearing that. That changes the wait times, but it doesn't necessarily change some of the other metrics of the service, wait times to a decision. There are other ways of measuring the effectiveness of this public service, and I want to be cognizant that it is also a judicial service, and sometimes measuring a metric can be a bit challenging on a judicial service. I do take the point that, when representing this here and relying on public resources, we want to make sure we are showing as many metrics as we can about the service people are receiving. Thank you.