

**ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE**

**QUESTION 453-19(2):  
TEMPORARY VARIATION OF STATUTORY TIME PERIODS**

**November 2, 2020**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madam la Presidente. I have some questions for the Minister of Justice. Back in June, we made some extraordinary efforts to pass something called a temporary, variation of temporary time periods COVID-19 Pandemic Measures Act. What this piece of legislation does is: it allows Cabinet, by order, to extend or adjust a date, deadline, or other time period prescribed in any act that our government has in place. I'd like to confirm with the Minister of Justice whether we've actually ever used this legislation. Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Each department is responsible for following the laws of the territory, and I haven't been keeping track of which departments have used this. It's not something that centrally comes to me. I can check to see. I can say from my own departments, neither Justice nor ECE has used this, although I know that there are plans at ECE to use this. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that. One of the sections, 2(2), says that an order will only come into force seven days after Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight actually gets a copy of that. I've never seen a copy of an order issued under this legislation, so I don't think it's ever been used. I'm just wondering if the Minister knows, we went to great lengths to pass this legislation quickly, why it hasn't been used? Can the Minister explain why this legislation is yet to be used?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I can't speak for every department. I know that when this legislation was being contemplated, it was clear there were some deadlines that departments weren't going to meet, and I just referenced ECE as being one of them. We didn't want to be in violation of other statutes. That's the reason this was put forward. Like I said, it expires, I believe in December, so there's still some time. I know we'll get at least some use of it, but I can't speak for other departments as to why this was not used. Perhaps, they found other workarounds. There was a lot of attention put to other things during the time when this bill was put forward, and this was sort of a backstop. I think it's a good thing that we haven't had to use it. We found other ways to comply with our legislation without reverting to this, and I think it shows the departments were being proactive and staying on top of the things they actually needed to stay on top of and the worst-case scenario didn't happen in a lot of situations.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that. Why I'm raising this is: back on April 11<sup>th</sup>, just at the beginning of the pandemic, I contacted the then Minister of Justice by email suggesting that our government look at the possibility of an omnibus bill to

make sure that we have the right kinds of things in place to properly deal with the pandemic. We've seen a few of these things roll out over the last few months now, but can the Minister of Justice tell us whether there's further changes, legislative changes, that are being contemplated to better allow us to respond to the pandemic?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** As the committee is aware, we are taking a lessons-learned approach, so we're looking at what have we learned over this last little while and moving forward. What do we need to do with the legislation? In some instances, it was clear. For example, with employment standards, there were some changes that were required in order to allow people to access federal benefits. Those ones are quite easy, but I don't have a comprehensive list of what changes departments have identified to date. That work is being undertaken right now, and at some point in the future, we will have that sort of lessons-learned that we can make the Members aware of.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madam la Presidente. I want to thank the Minister for that response. If this comprehensive review has been going on for months, can the Minister commit to share some of that information with this side of the House so we have a better understanding of what legislative changes the Cabinet is looking at making to better allow us to respond to the pandemic? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wouldn't characterize what's been happening as a comprehensive review. That indicates that there are working groups and there's a lot going on. We are working through this pandemic, which is still ongoing. We haven't gone through an entire season yet. We haven't gone through an entire fiscal year. We haven't gone through an entire budgeting cycle, so there's still a lot to be learned. As we learn things, we're making note of them. Thank you, Madam Speaker.