

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Office of Devolution Sunsetting
Committee of the Whole—2018-2019 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Executive and Indigenous Affairs—February 11, 2021

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Can I get an explanation as to the sunsetting of the Office of Devolution Initiatives? As I understood it, they were tasked with obtaining an offshore petroleum resources management agreement. I'm not aware of an agreement being signed yet. They were also involved in trying to develop a terms of reference for further work on MVRMA transition. I have never seen a terms of reference. Why is this being sunsetted? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I will turn that to Mr. Goldney for the answer. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy Minister Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. When we were looking at the progress of work being made and the resources that we have available, we were confident that we could let the sunsets set and still move forward with those initiatives with the resources that we have. We are very optimistic that we'll see significant progress and milestones reached on an offshore accord, hopefully even before March 31st, if we can, but there is good progress being made there. On the MVRMA initiatives, we do recognize that we've got resources, including those that support the intergovernmental council, that work very closely with Indigenous government officials, as well, so we expect much of that work to be carried forward with those resources. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm glad to hear the optimism of the deputy minister, but I'd like to get a little bit more concrete information. Can the Minister commit to providing committee with a written update of the status of the negotiations for the offshore? I don't even know what our negotiating position is other than, hopefully, we want to get something at least as generous as the Maritime provinces have received from the federal government. I'd like to start with that. Can I get a commitment out of the Minister that she is going to provide a written update briefing on the status of the negotiations and whether we are actually at a point of getting an agreement? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Madam Chair, absolutely, we will provide a written update on where exactly we are with that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate that commitment from the Minister. Likewise, on the MVRMA transition: as I understood, there had to be some kind of an

agreed-upon study to look at whether any further authority might be delegated or legislative authority might be provided to GNWT. What is the status of that work? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Madam Chair, I'll turn that to Mr. Goldney.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Deputy Minister Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The focus of that work, at least in the initial phases, has been to engage with Indigenous governments and try and come, to the extent possible, to a common understanding of what might be appropriate to see more authority delegated. That is what officials have been working on with Indigenous governments. Indigenous governments, of course, have their own priorities, too, so a lot of that focus and a lot of those resources were first directed at the development of the intergovernmental council protocol on legislative development. Now that that work has been successfully completed, there are more discussions expected on the MVRMA work. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm trying to find a way to not delve too much into the weeds here, but I'm hoping that the Minister would actually consult with this side of the House before an offshore accord would be signed or there had been an agreement reached with the intergovernmental council on what might get studied in terms of the MVRMA. Can the Minister make that commitment, that she would consult with Regular MLAs before signing off on this kind of an arrangement so we would actually know what our government is doing? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely, I will make that commitment that, prior to signing, I will give an update to standing committee on the status. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes. I just want to nail that down, that, before an offshore accord would get signed, this side would have an opportunity to look at it and give some feedback. That's one commitment, and then I'll follow it up with a second one. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will make a commitment that we will work with the other side to receive some feedback, but recognizing, Madam Chair, that there are other parties involved in this work, as well. I cannot commit that whatever the committee says shall be written in stone. We have other parties at the table. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes. I fully understand that. Look, it's a complicated arrangement. It involves IRC. It involves the Government of Yukon, the federal government; I get it. However, on the MVRMA side, I'd like to get the same commitment from the Minister that, before an agreement that might be negotiated with the intergovernmental council, this side of the House would have an opportunity to provide some input into, or at least understand and know and give some feedback on, what we might agreeing to in terms of MVRMA transition. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I will commit that we will provide an update to standing committee and take their feedback. Again, that one involves even more parties at the table. Thank you, Madam Chair.