

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Municipal ATIPP Implementation
Committee of the Whole—2021-2022 Capital Budget Review
Dept. of Municipal and Community Affairs—February 23, 2021

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Could I get an update as to where we are with ATIP implementation with municipal governments? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to hand this question over to the deputy minister. I will just get her to respond. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister Young.

MS. YOUNG: Thank you, Madam Chair. Committee may recall, I believe, last year when we were speaking, we were just about to meet with our working group comprised of representatives from the Association of Communities. Although COVID hit, we did manage to have the first meeting with stakeholders in, I believe it was, April or May of 2020. Since that time, there had been a number of staff changes within the Justice team working on this working group with us, so we have been regrouping with them and preparing a discussion document to bring back to the working group that proposes a work plan and timeline. We are now just trying to set up the follow-up meeting with the working group for that next meeting.

We had indicated 18 months from the time that we got the working group together until we would have an implementation plan, and although we were delayed at the beginning of this, I believe we still can accomplish the implementation plan conversation. What we are trying to do is do some of that research as part of our own work to bring forward ideas to the working group instead of starting from scratch with them so that it should facilitate the conversation a little bit easier. That is where we are at right now, just trying to get the working group back together to talk about the next steps. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Am I right, then, that there has only been one meeting of the working group? There hasn't even been a second one. Is that correct?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of MACA.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, that is correct.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm just more than a little bit worried about the pace of this. I was in the last Assembly. We passed the changes in August of 2019. That's more than a year and a half ago now. I know COVID has obviously slowed things down. Has the department identified any resource needs, financial needs, for community governments to implement this legislation, and if so, is it found in this

budget? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just currently, I just know about the working group and the communication with the association of communities. I am not clear if there is a set budget or else if there was any commitment financially within this budget. I will just have Ms. Eleanor Young respond. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister Young.

MS. YOUNG: Thank you, Madam Chair. There has been a discussion with the stakeholders about resource impacts, but the actual resource needs are subject to the implementation plan. Whether software is required, for example, whether additional staff are required, those are questions to be answered as part of the implementation plan. There has been a general conversation, but the specifics around what the resource requirements would be have not been identified. If those are identified, then the department would obviously bring those forward as part of the process before we implement the legislation with communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I look forward to a supplementary appropriation by the department to make sure that community governments can actually have their costs covered. I do not think it's fair that this responsibility is downloaded onto them without resources. Is this something that the Minister wants to try to accomplish before the end of this Assembly? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is something I will work towards, but with the capacity that we have at the smaller community level and looking at what is required, the consultation, the meetings with NWTAC, I feel that we would be working towards that. I don't feel that it would be completed within the lifetime of this Assembly. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess if I ask the question, I have got to live with the answer. I don't find that an acceptable response, though. That it would take more than four years to actually implement this. That is just totally unacceptable, so I just leave that on the record. One of the other pieces of legislation that the department is apparently working on is the Property Assessment and Taxation Act. I served on Yellowknife city council from 1996 to 2007, and we were talking about the necessary changes to that legislation when I was on council. That is at least 13 years ago, maybe 14 years ago if I try to do my math properly. Why is that piece of legislation taking so long to fix? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will have Mr. Gary Schauerte comment. That is historical information, as well, but also, I am looking at the priorities of

each Assembly that has looked at these acts going forward. I will have him elaborate on the response. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Schauerte.

MR. SCHAUERTE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Already referenced earlier was work that we did on other legislation in the 18th Assembly, which in part contributed to why we were not working on PATA during the 18th Assembly. As the Member has pointed out, community governments have spoken out about this legislation on a number of occasions, and there are currently probably six outstanding resolutions from the NWT Association of Communities related to this legislation. That really was the starting point for the department of where we started to identify issues that needed to be addressed through this legislative review. As we have continued to conduct our research, we have identified plenty of other things that could be improved in the legislation, as well, beyond those that have been raised or put into writing by community governments.

The reason why we are taking our time again with this legislation is that, when we open it up for purposes of amendments, we want to make sure that we bring it up to date and change as many things as possible. Issues that have been raised by community governments have been part of answering that question. We have also been conducting comprehensive research right across the country in terms of how the business of assessment is being completed in all jurisdictions in order to help modernize the act. In part, we are pulling all of that work together to help inform the LP. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. This is going to be the last comment for me. I am hoping that the Premier is listening because I do not know what the problem is with departments bringing forward legislation. Yes, 14 years to develop changes to the Property Assessment and Taxation Act, four-plus years for bringing the amendments to the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act to cover municipal governments, even start with the city, towns and villages, this is just totally unacceptable. I just do not understand why we as a government cannot move forward with legislation more quickly. I got elected here to make change, but that change relies on the other side of the House actually bringing forward legislation. Fourteen years is just totally unacceptable; four-plus years for the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, unacceptable. I just do not know what else I can say. Premier, you have got to go out and find the resources to get the departments moving on this legislation moving forward. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of MACA, did you have any comments?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I hear my colleagues on the other side. We need to see these legislations come forward and the significant changes to be made. I will be providing a summary and an update and looking at the phased-in approach that we have planned within the department, and I will look at the presentation to committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

