

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 148-18(2): CO-MANAGEMENT BOARDS VACANCIES

June 2, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier today I have questions for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations on NWT Co-Management Board vacancies. Two of the boards do not have a quorum and 22 percent of the positions are currently unfilled. What is the Minister doing to ensure that we have an effective Co-Management system with fully staff boards? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have done a number of things. First of all we attempted to have the authority for the boards devolve to the Northwest Territories, which was not accepted by the federal government because of the fact they had a national regulatory improvement process across Canada so they felt it was in their interest to continue to keep the MVRMA boards under their jurisdiction. In the latest election when we wrote to all of the party leaders, the leader of the Liberal Party wrote back that if they were elected they would review the environmental assessment process and we saw that as an opportunity now that we have the Liberal government. So we approached them as to the fact that through the devolution process responsibility for the MVRMA was going to be reviewed after a five-year process, and we put forward a case that we didn't have to wait five years, we should start to work so that we could transfer those responsibilities to the Government of the Northwest Territories very quickly. So we're still pursuing that process with Minister Bennett. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: The Department of Executive Website has a board appointment section on it, but there's really no easy way to determine which positions are vacant and for how long and when positions may be opening up. Would the Minister commit to improving the website in the interest of getting vacancies filled more quickly and to ensure greater transparency?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I should clarify that on our website it is referring to Northwest Territories Boards; those boards that are our responsibility. If the Member is suggesting that we also include federal boards, I'll be meeting with Minister Bennett next week so I can certainly raise that with her as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: And I'll be happy to have a chat with the Minister afterwards and we can chat about that website because I think there must be some misunderstanding here. But I think there are some other longer term solutions. The Minister talked about delegation of appointment authority. We might also look at having an independent body that would vet applications to ensure a balance of expertise and experience on these boards. We could also look at perhaps a policy of nominating candidates for sunseting positions, maybe six months or even a year before appointments are due. Has the Minister considered these sorts of longer term solutions that I've just mentioned?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I believe we're doing that for NWT boards and for those board appointments that fall under our purview.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. We may disagree on a number of things here. But this issue of co-management vacancies is obviously a long-standing one when some positions have

gone unfulfilled as long as five and a half years. Can the Minister commit to report to this House at least annually on co-management board vacancies and efforts to improve and avoid these sort of lengthy delays and appointments? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll be pleased to do that. And where it has been pointed out to us by our Aboriginal government partners, we've made representation to the federal government and generally they respond on a very quick basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.