

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 210-18(2): ROLE OF NWT POWER CORPORATION IN RENEWABLE ENERGY SOLUTIONS

June 13, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I would like to put the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation to work today. Earlier today I related the story of NTPCs cancellation of a request for expression of interest for a joint venture supplying wind and solar energy for the North Slave. The NTPC forward board vice-chair said that the direction to abandon the renewables project came from GNWT. Can the Minister confirm whether this is true and why the GNWT would interfere with this process? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister responsible for NWT Power Corporation.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a result of two consecutive low-water years, the Power Corporation sought expressions of interest in November of 2015 with a closing date of February 5th, 2016. They received 29 expressions. At that point, the Power Corporation and the government and Arctic Energy Alliance evaluated the proposals and decided not to proceed to the next step which would have been a request for a competitive procurement. So they were simply seeking expressions of interest. It was not cancelled by the government. Twenty-nine were submitted. They were found not to be economic so it didn't proceed beyond that stage. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I thank the Minister for his response. The recently released North Slave resiliency study did not consider climate change and made no predictions of future water levels. Low waters have caused this government to burn through more than \$60 million in diesel subsidies in recent years. That is money that could have gone into renewable energy development. What role does the Minister see the NTPC playing in building capacity for wind, solar, and biomass in the North Slave region?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: As the House heard last week, we will be proceeding with a new energy plan. The Premier spoke to that before the House last week. As a Crown corporation, the Power Corporation will play a critical role in the proposed energy plan. We already play a critical role in the development of alternative and renewable energy systems, including the recently opened Colville Lake plant. There are also solar plants in Fort Liard, Fort Simpson, and Wrigley. Hydro itself is a renewable resource, a green source of power. As the energy plan is rolled out, the Power Corporation will play an integral role in its development.

MR. O'REILLY: I appreciate the answer from the Minister. I recognize that NTPC is doing some good work on renewables in communities and that they are going to be playing a critical role in the development of the energy plant. I think part of the issue, though, is that some of the same people that are running the Power Corporation, those Deputy Ministers, are going to be the same Ministers in charge of helping develop the energy plants. Can the Minister describe for this House what role those Deputy Ministers will play in the development and implementation of the upcoming energy plan?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the deputy ministers do have two roles in the sense that apart from their usual responsibilities they also will be directors of the corporation. The energy plan will be rolled out in the next few months as the Premier mentioned last week. I am confident that the directors of the Power Corporation will be able to fulfill that role and also their usual role as deputy ministers.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I will be very interested to see how this rolls out over the next while. Some in this House have called for the development of large hydro projects that could even flood communities to export power. Earlier, I spoke of another vision for the NTCP where it would basically be doing itself out of a job by building energy self-sufficiency in communities and households across the NWT. Can the Minister explain what is the current vision of NTPC? Will it become an instrument of this government for big hydro for export or build energy self-sufficiency? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister responsible for NWT Power Corporation.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There seem to be a lot of questions in that question. I don't think the Power Corporation is currently contemplating any large hydro developments that will flood communities. If they are, they haven't informed us on this side of the House. The corporation is committed, of course, to providing reliable power to all of our communities. In fact, there are initiatives to encourage people to reduce their power bill. It is, in some ways, difficult for the corporation because, as people conserve power and use less, they receive less revenue. But we are committed to providing safe, reliable, and energy-efficient power to all of our communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.