

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

### QUESTION 276-18(2): FEDERAL REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

June 27, 2016

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I spoke about the recently announced federal review of the environmental assessment processes. While I welcome this initiative to rebuild public confidence, there is no place for residents in the Mackenzie Valley to participate in this review. Can the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations shed any light on why we have been excluded from this review and whether this was discussed in his meeting with the federal Minister for Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can shed a lot of light on that matter. During the federal election, in response to a question that was posed by ourselves to all of the leaders of the federal parties, I posed a question about the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, or the Northern Regulatory Improvement Initiative that was called at the time, that the leader of the liberal party, and now the Prime Minister, in his response, wrote back and said that their government would be doing a review of the whole environmental assessment process and they would set it right. In my first meeting with the Prime Minister, I asked him about it. We were ready and willing to be engaged. I also met with Minister Bennett a couple of times now. She indicated that she is quite prepared for our government to be involved in a joint review of the MVRMA. I talked to fisheries Minister LeBlanc, and he is very willing, very excited, about our government participating in the review of the Fisheries Act. In hindsight, the fact that we are not involved in the federal review is probably a good thing because that is what caused these issues anyways. Minister Bennett has indicated we will be fully involved in dealing with the northern regulatory process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I appreciate the response from the Minister. But certainly the previous federal government made a number of unilateral changes to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act that resulted in a successful court challenge by the Tlicho government. Has the Minister's cabinet colleagues had any communications with the federal government over the court challenge and any plans to repeal those changes?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** We have engaged in the federal government on a number of fronts on this because it is a very important matter to us. The MVRMA is a product of land claims negotiations in the Mackenzie Valley. The goal of this legislation is to provide a single process. It provides a voice for each of the groups. Although the legislation is federal, it is the result of a collaborative process. In our minds there are three types of activities right now, all linked to the MVRMA.

First and foremost is the fact that, as the Member indicated, Canada made a number of changes to the MVRMA that impacted the North. It is not clear to us if Canada is doing the background work necessary to implement these changes, for example, consultation guidelines. We have also raised the matter of participant funding, as the Member has indicated. And we have asked as to where the federal government is going with that. We know the federal government has stood down on the Tlicho legal action. But it was not clear to us, and they haven't indicated where they are going with that. We also have the fact, as the Member stated, that Canada has made commitments to restore credibility to environmental assessment

commitments that would include reviewing the MVRMA. They have indicated that we would be involved in a joint review of the MVRMA. We are holding them to that. Of course, in the devolution agreement, Canada committed to review the devolution agreement provisions related to MVRMA. The previous government agreed to five years. We have told this government we think we could do it sooner. Also, there are requirements itself that the government has to put in place to fully implement devolution through the MVRMA process, which we are still waiting for indication from the federal government as to how they are proposing to do it.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I appreciate the response again from the Minister. The federal government has now indicated they are ready to repeal sections of some changes that were made to Yukon environmental assessment legislation. Has the Minister received any assurances from the federal government that they are going to be repealing the changes to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, and is there a timetable for those changes?

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** We have received no indication that they will be repealing any legislation. We have no timelines. The last meeting I had was with the federal fisheries Minister where there is an indication that the review of the Fisheries Act will also look at the Navigable Waters Act, will also look at environmental assessment. And we indicated to him that we were ready, willing, and available to participate. He was very excited about that, and he was looking forward to us participating and working with him on it.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral question. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The Fisheries Act is an important piece of federal legislation. I am glad there is going to be some changes, perhaps a need to that. But I am talking about the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and this federal review of environmental assessment processes and how the North has been excluded. I am wondering if I can get a commitment out of the Minister to write to the federal Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and seek a firm timeline for repealing those changes to Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and some way for us, as Northerners, to be involved in the federal process that is being undertaken? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. BOB MCLEOD:** I have already written to the Indigenous affairs Minister a number of times. I have met with her at least three or four times. We will be meeting again in the coming months. I am quite prepared to write to her again to specifically ask her about the environmental assessment and if she has any timelines.