

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

### QUESTION 289-18(2): 2015 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

June 28, 2016

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I had a good meeting with the Minister of Lands earlier today on the issue of financial securities, but I need to follow-up on some of the issues raised in the environmental audit that I spoke about earlier today. The GNWT response to the audit finding simply stated there was agreement with the intent of the recommendation and that work would be done with other departments, as required. Can the Minister of Lands tell this House why his department did not fully support the audit finding and what parts the department did not agree with? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister of Lands.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our response reflect that securities management is a shared responsibility and there's authority for securities in the MVRMA that extent well beyond our lands role. We will work with the other authorities that have responsibility for securities in order to meet the intent of the recommendations found in the audit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I appreciate the response from the Minister. The recommendation was aimed at us, and there are things that we kind of should be doing. But the auditor could not confirm that we actually hold all the financial security, as required under land use permits and water licenses. What specific actions is the Minister taking to ensure we can actually track this information better than the Federal Government that did not really do a good job looking after our resources?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** We actually just received approval yesterday through a sub-process to implement information, our securities tracking system, I think that will give us the ability to keep up-to-date. And as we learn more and more about our roles in the whole thing, you know, being in existence for two years, I think we've improved, and we look to improve even further. And an opportunity we had today too to meet with committee, we gave them an update as to some of the work we're doing. We got some feedback from committee. But the major one is the securities information tracking system, which will allow us to be able to track or securities. And, again, we will keep members informed.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I appreciate the response from the Minister. And I know the money for that tracking system was carried over from last year. We're going to hopefully spend it this year and get the work done, and I look forward to getting those updates. But the auditor could not locate any vision or implementation documents related to our management of financial securities. Can the Minister tell this House if such documents exist and when the public will be fully engaged on a sound financial security system to prevent public liabilities, as set out in our mandate?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, we are currently developing a work plan and I have made the commitment that, once that work is completed, I will share the findings and receive feedback from committee as to what the next steps are. As with most things within the territorial government, we always welcome public feedback, and once we develop the work plan and we receive some feedback from committee, then we can determine the next steps as to the actual public consultation part of it. We always welcome any opportunities that the public wants to make comments on some of the work we're doing. But we will get the work plan done and share it with Committee, and then we'll determine next steps from there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the response. I look forward to working with the Minister on this reviewing of the work plan when it comes forward. In this house I've outlined the financial warning signs whereby we might acquire additional financial liabilities with regard to our surface leases for the Cantung Mine and Prairie Creek properties, and I don't feel that we've got detailed information on what this government is doing to prevent liabilities from these operations. Could the Minister tell us when we can expect to have a fully functioning financial security and monitoring system in place to prevent further public liabilities? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** We are currently in the process of staffing our project assessment of financial liabilities assurance division. This is a highly specialized occupation. We thought that, with the slowdown in some of the work in the Northwest Territories, we'd get more interest, so we're actually just reviewing how we put out our competition, and I can assure the Member and people in the Northwest Territories that the Department of Lands and the Government of the Northwest Territories, we take our role very seriously as to the environment and the lands that have come over to us through devolution. We've heard many cases in the past where we didn't have that authority and some of the environmental issues we've had to deal with we've had to inherit. And luckily with some of the ones that came over through devolution, Canada has accepted the responsibility for remediation. And that's in the past. On a go-forward basis, we are going to ensure that we take our roles very seriously and ensure that there are sufficient securities in place for any environmental work in the Northwest Territories.