

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE

Safe Advantage Program

Committee of the Whole—2016-2017 Operating Budget Review

Dept. of Human Resources—June 3, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. We'll look forward to that in 2018. I had one other matter I wanted to pursue. It's the Safe Advantage program, which I think is run through our Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission. I think, overall, GNWT has had some problems with our compliance and ratings and have had to pay a number of fines in the past as a result of, I guess, our not very good performance. So what kind of assurance can the Minister provide? Or tell us what's happening in terms of the Safe Advantage program. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Minister.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we are committed to a safe workplace for all of our staff. Our people are our most valuable asset, and we need to make sure that they are working in safe environments. To that end, the Department of Human Resources does provide assistance to all the departments who have established individual occupational health and safety committees throughout most of the work sites and most of the departments through the GNWT, most of the departments, not necessarily every work site.

I can tell you that through the Safe Advantage program there have been years where we have got fines. There was, when the program was first put in place, we got fined a number of years in a row. The fines are dependent on a couple of things. They are dependent on our claims history over a given year. They are dependent upon how we respond to a questionnaire that is provided to us, and our claims history, and then also a site visit or a telephone call to a location. I can tell you that for this year we have passed, and there is no claim or no fine going to be levelled against the Government of the Northwest Territories. I believe last year we were also fine-free. But we have had years where we have been fined, and this is something that the Department of Human Resources as well as every other department in the Government of the Northwest Territories must stay on top of, must ensure that we do have the safe work sites that we want for our employees.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. That's certainly good news to hear that we passed this year and that there were no fines because, of course, as we want to set a good example as one of the main employers in the Northwest Territories and particularly as a public government. I presume that there's some sort of report that will come through this evaluation. Can the Minister commit to provide that report to the House? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Minister.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, we do get a report and a summary from the WSCC, who is administering the Safe Advantage program? I can say that this year we actually did pretty good with respect to our results. We compiled its March 2015-16 management questionnaire and submitted a response: 92 per cent on part one and 100 per cent on part two. So we did pretty good. And we did all right on the interview, which resulted in no fine. And we will provide the report, when we get it, to committee.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Chair, I think it's good that the report will be provided to committee, but I guess I'm hoping that the Minister will commit to table the document in the House. I think we want to show that we're leading by example, so I'd ask if he could table the report in the House. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Mr. Minister.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, before I commit to tabling that document, I would like to obviously talk to the Minister responsible for the WSCC. It's really their report to table, but given that our information's in there I will certainly have a conversation with the Minister responsible for the WSCC.