

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 371-18(2): HYDRAULIC FRACTURING REGULATORY SYSTEM

October 20, 2016

MR. O'REILLY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today, I spoke of the uncertainty and lack of transparency around how hydraulic fracturing seems to be taking place in the Northwest Territories. There doesn't seem to be any kind of monitoring program for abandoned wells and no funds from industry to help to do this or pay for any remediation that may be necessary. Alberta has an orphan or abandoned well system. Will the Minister responsible commit to developing and implementing a polluter-pay system to ensure that there is monitoring, inspection, and the necessary funds to carry out remediation of abandoned wells? Merci, Monsieur le President.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Industry, Tourism, and Investment.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have committed in our mandate to develop and propose amendments to the Oil and Gas Operations Act and the Petroleum Resources Act. These acts are currently mirrored on the federal government that was in place prior to devolution, but, moving forward, we are currently in the early stages and we will be seeking input from MLAs and others for information on this process. The public review process, when it happens, will be the opportunity that we must use to identify and address those in areas of concern and priority of NWT residents. I guess the other thing I'd like to mention is the Member has raised a number concerns on oil and gas so far in the House, and I can assure him that these are well recognized, and I welcome him to bring these comments forward when we help guide this review. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I appreciate the response from the Minister. I really look forward to bringing forward my ideas and suggestions when we finally get there, but the response by the Premier to my written questions tabled earlier in this session reveals a convoluted regulatory system that is not open or transparent. Previously, we've heard the words "evolve" and "devolve." Can the Minister responsible provide any assurances that we will improve this and move to a co-management system as is currently in place for land and water, where openness and transparency are far greater?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: To answer the Member's question, we will need to obtain the technical information from the office of the regulator of the oil and gas operations, and, as such, I'll have to take this question as notice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.