

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

### QUESTION 383-18(2): REMEDIATION OF ARSENIC CONTAMINATION NEAR GIANT MINE SITE

October 25, 2016

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend the lead story on CBC's national website was about arsenic contamination throughout the Yellowknife area. My questions are for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. What role is the Government of the Northwest Territories taking on the analysis and remediation of the widespread arsenic pollution beyond the borders of the Giant Mine site? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, GNWT, we're a co-proponent of the Giant Mine remediation project, and the Giant Mine remediation project we are currently undertaking an additional human health risk assessment to supplement the previous assessments. This work includes consolidation of a wide array of existing studies and reports both on the Giant Mine site and offsite. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I appreciate the response from the Minister. I'm aware of the health risk assessment work that's being done around the Giant Mine site as part of that work. What specifically is the department doing about the offsite activity or the offsite contamination outside of the Giant Mine? You know, what sort of review of the effects of arsenic pollution caused by mining activities in the Yellowknife area on our environment and human health is the department actually working on?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, we have an interdepartmental GNWT legacy committee which includes Health and Social Services, ENR, Lands, WSCC, and ITI. It was created in 2015 to provide a coordinated approach to the topic of legacy contaminants. I am also aware of at least seven projects that are being conducted by academic institutions and one by ENR to study the legacy of contaminants in the Yellowknife area.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I thank the Minister for his response. I understand that there are a number of departments coordinating their work. That is good. Our understanding of arsenic and its toxicity has changed significantly over the last decade. How has this new knowledge influenced how we approach our assessment of arsenic in the Yellowknife area?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, the Member is correct. We have a better understanding of the effects of arsenic. Development of a bio monitoring program through the human health effects monitoring program of the residents of Yellowknife, Ndilo, and Detah, to understand current health is underway. This will set a baseline for our ongoing monitoring.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I again thank the Minister for doing his homework before coming into the House today. That is great.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources published an environmental guideline for contaminated site remediation in November 2003. Appendix 4 of that document contains remediation objectives for arsenic and soils depending on the end use. These guidelines, though, are now almost 13 years old. When does the department intend to review and update

these guidelines? Will the Minister commit to consult this side of the House and the public as part of that update? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Member pointing out the fact that I need to do additional homework on this particular issue. That is fine. I will make that commitment to have a conversation with my officials and see what updates are underway, and then I will share that information with the Members. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.