

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 565-18(2): ROLE OF REGULAR MEMBERS IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

February 14, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations. The Process Convention on Communication states:

"Except under extraordinary circumstances, Members of the Legislative Assembly should be made aware of and have opportunity to discuss significant announcements, changes, consultations, or initiatives before they are released to the public or introduced in the Legislative Assembly."

Would the Minister agree that there is a need to improve communications and involvement with regular MLAs when it comes to engagement with federal Ministers? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to reassure the Member that we signed the Health Accord, which is more than the original offer, and we communicated that in writing. The Member would seem to suggest that we can control federal Ministers and their travels. Nothing can be further from the truth. We just had the Prime Minister come, and we had the Minister of Health, and the meetings are confirmed a day before they are here. The Minister of Health requested the meetings, and she did not say what she wanted to talk about.

This has been an issue. We have raised it before with the Government of Canada, that federal Ministers come and go and they are not required to check in with us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I know it is a special day, and I am really feeling the love from the other side of the House. Can the Minister, though, commit to consulting with regular MLAs on GNWT positions and negotiations on federal-provincial-territorial agreements?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: We adhere very closely to the priorities and mandates that are set by this House. We have a federal engagement strategy that we have shared with the standing committee, and we follow the protocol that is set out in the Guiding Principles and Process Conventions.

MR. O'REILLY: I think every single session I have been here, I keep raising these issues and concerns. I just don't seem to be getting anywhere with my Cabinet colleagues. I have tried to suggest a number of constructive ways of improving this working relationship. Can the Minister commit to regular reporting on meetings held between GNWT Ministers and federal Ministers and the tracking of results, for example, the kind of statement that the Minister made today?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: I believe that, with all of the responsibilities that Ministers have, there are probably about 25 to 30 federal-provincial-territorial meetings that occur on an annual basis. I believe that, in every instance, there are press releases and communiques that come out of them. Certainly, I understand that we share those with Regular Members, and we will continue to do so.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the Minister that, if there are communiques and so on, that we don't always see that kind of material, so I would certainly encourage him to share it with this side of the House. Again, can the Minister commit to recommending to federal Ministers and their staff that during visits to the Northwest Territories there be meetings with regular MLAs through the appropriate standing committees? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will communicate that to the Prime Minister.