

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

**QUESTION 584-18(2): SOCIO-ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS**

**February 16, 2017**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. On the weekend I was doing some work, research for my Member's statement on socio-economic agreements, so I went to the departmental website. There's a mix of unsigned versions and only one completed and signed agreement there. Can the Minister commit to getting the final and signed versions of all these agreements on the department's website within a reasonable period of time? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll have to have a look into this. If there's the only one posted there, certainly there are other agreements that have been signed off and have been in place for a number of years and I will ensure that the ones that are signed off and in place, that we will have them posted on the website. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I can assure the Minister that all those agreements are there, but most of them are unsigned, most of them are undated. I had to go to secondary sources to try to actually find out when they signed, like, news releases and so on. In any event, I look forward to having them all there.

As I raised in my statement earlier today, there are few, if any, legally binding commitments in the current socio-economic agreements. Can the Minister confirm these agreements are really best-efforts arrangements with few, if any, specific binding commitments with penalties and sanctions for non-compliance?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** These socio-economic agreements that we have in place, which benefit Northern businesses, Aboriginal groups, and Northern people, are a great partnership, and that's how the Government of the Northwest Territories looks at these agreements. We take the partnership approach to it and corroboration and collaboration with these companies to try to bring as many investment and employment opportunities and business opportunities to the residents of the Northwest Territories, and that's the basis of these agreements.

**MR. O'REILLY:** That's great that these are partnerships, but when people don't live up to them there have got to be some sanctions there or some way of ensuring compliance again.

So there's a mix of commitments in terms of office locations and functions in the current socio-economic agreements. When I looked at the Voisey's Bay development agreement and our inability to retain head offices for large resource development projects, what is the Minister prepared to do to ensure that there are no further main office closures in Yellowknife by resource developers?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** These are agreements that are presently in place. When they were signed back in the early 90s and later 90s, we never had the regulatory authority over this; this was done under the federal government, the system that was in place at that time, and we have to live up to what was taking place then. When we move forward, as we try to attract new mining companies to the Northwest Territories, we will try to enshrine the stuff that's important to Northerners and the Northwest Territories and ensure we get the best deal for the people of the North.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final question, Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. Glad to hear the Minister say that we're going to start being a little bit tougher with our negotiations so that we can retain more of the benefits here for Northerners.

One way to perhaps help that: can the Minister commit to having a thorough and independent review of our socio-economic agreements conducted so we can learn from others and our own mistakes, and will he agree to make such a review public? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** As we move forward with the new socio-economic agreements with up-and-coming mining companies, some of this conversation is already taking place with the potential new mines that are in place and negotiations are under way. As for the Member's comments of having a full review, I'm not committed to doing that just yet. We have to get our mine regulations and stuff in place, as devolution has come upon us and we have to work on how we're going to make our House better; once that sort of stuff is in place, then we can have a better look at it.