

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

### QUESTION 680-18(2): GIANT MINE OVERSIGHT BOARD RESEARCH FUNDING

March 3, 2017

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. I mentioned in my statement earlier today that the federal government is not living up to the spirit, intent, and letter of the Giant Mine Environmental Agreement by allowing the carryover of unspent funds to build up a research program into a permanent solution to the arsenic. Is the Minister aware of this issue, and what is he doing to address this problem? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am aware of this, and I don't think there is any ill intent on behalf of Canada, I believe, once they realize that they would be contravening a section of the Treasury Board rules to rollover the money. My understanding is they are taking steps to find a solution for this. As we know more, I will share that with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yes, I am aware that there is provision in the agreement for the federal government to go to the Treasury Board to resolve this on a permanent basis, but there is a way for them to address the issue right now, and that is just simply to increase the contribution agreement for the next year by the amount that was unspent in the previous year. That would allow for, essentially, a carryover. I guess I would like to know from the Minister what he believes are the next steps that he and his staff will take to get implementation of this key feature of the agreement back on track.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** The federal government are the funding contributors to this, and, as such, they make the decision. They try to live within the rules. I take the Member's point, and, at the earliest opportunity, I will convey our concerns to the federal government and see if there are ways, solutions, that they can find to allow the carryover of this money.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I appreciate the commitment of the Minister. Our government did sign this agreement, as well, so we do have some obligations, and this is certainly in the best interest of Yellowknifers now and into the future. There is some urgency to getting this issue sorted out. April 1 is coming up quickly, so I am just wondering how confident the Minister is that we can get the federal government to live up to this agreement and to ensure that all the appropriate funds are available to invest in the Northwest Territories.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** I am confident that I can reach out to the federal government. At the end of the day, the decision is theirs. I could try to see if I can secure a timeline for them, but I can't speak on their behalf. I can only commit to what we can do as a government, is to reach out to them. I commit to the Member that I will do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the commitment from the Minister on that. We know April 1 is coming up quickly. There is provision in the agreement for dispute resolution. I am wondering, would the Minister be prepared to recommend that the giant mine oversight body invoke the dispute resolution process under the environmental agreement if we can't resolve this quickly? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will follow up on that and see what tools we have at our disposal to help find a solution for the funding. I will commit to following up on that.