

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

### QUESTION 722-18(2): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AGRICULTURE STRATEGY March 9, 2017

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. My Member's statement there, I said there are no measurable targets or goals in the NWT Agricultural Strategy or the action plan. Can the Minister explain why there are no measurable targets in the strategy and plan? I'll give a couple of examples; an increase in agricultural production by 50 per cent in five years, or completion of food security plans for all communities within five years. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The broad overall objectives, the one thing we've got to remember: this is our very first agricultural strategy in the Northwest Territories. What we are trying to do with this strategy, what other people have done in 20 years, we are trying to do it in 10 years. It was part of the mandate to try to grow the agriculture sector. We see it as an economic development agenda. We have heard that in community engagements, along with all these other things that are implemented within the strategy. This is a blueprint of what the communities, the growers, the farm people in the Northwest Territories have said they want, that outlines actions that must be taken, and investments that we must make into the strategy moving forward, and over time, we hope to implement the strategy that will advance these commitments that we have made in cost of living, fostering healthy families, and enhancing capacity, youth programs for youth, so these are many things that we put forward along with all the residents in the NWT that have participated in it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I thank the Minister for those aspirational statements, but I guess I'm looking for something measurable. I will give him another chance here. There are no cost estimates for any of the activities identified in the action plan attached to the strategy and, of course, there are no new funds identified in the 2017-18 budget for implementation of the strategy. Can the Minister tell us whether we have to wait another year to find the money and start some of these activities?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** As I said, this is a high-level strategy designed to encourage the sector to grow and move forward. There are costs to some of these action items that we see in the strategy. The department is presently working on them and calculating what those are going to cost moving forward. At present, we work with the federal government and the Growing Forward partnership with \$1.2 million annually. We are trying to increase that. When we were down with our engagement with the federal government, I had a chance to meet with the Minister of Agriculture, and discuss this initiative moving forward, and I have also invited him to the Northwest Territories to have a look at our agriculture going forward. I talked to him about Gameti, the NFTI farm and initiatives like that, so we are hoping to be able to leverage some federal dollars moving forward. The GNWT has an agricultural working group within the

departments, and we will help try to figure out how we can leverage dollars from all the departments to make this work.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Once again, thanks to the Minister for that response. I still have some carrots in my fridge, and I am happy to share them with the Minister, and he can pass them onto the Federal Minister as well. I could not find anything in the strategy about research and development into northern agricultural techniques and technology, or circumpolar cooperation or partnerships. Can the Minister tell me why research and development and circumpolar cooperation and partnerships are not found in the agricultural strategy?

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Like I said, what has taken everyone 20 years to do, we want to do it in 10 years. In particular, I want to speak about the Yukon Government. We have engaged with them. Their strategy is quite a bit ahead of us. As most people know here, they have a robust agricultural industry in the Yukon, so we have engaged with them. We are learning from their best practices and experiences, so we are drawing on a lot of that. Plus, we have also sent representatives from the department recently to the circumpolar agricultural conference that was held in Iceland, and we want to continue to build on that partnership and relationship moving this forward.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Minister. I am going to give him a few more carrots now. I think we are heading on the right track, but one of the issues that has been on the books for years is the availability of agricultural land. What process is the Minister going to action right now to identify and make available more land for agricultural purposes? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, ITI cannot do this thing alone. We are working with Health and Department of Lands. In this particular question, the Department of Lands is a key department on moving this whole strategy forward. We are working with Lands on this issue. I believe they informed committee on a lot of the issues on moving forward with the regulations and stuff with that, and we will continue to work with that and be the partners with Land, how we are going to figure this out to access more land for agriculture in the Northwest Territories.