

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 731-18(2): EXTENSION OF MINING WORK CREDIT PROGRAM

March 10, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Can the Minister tell us why there was no consultation with the standing committee on the extension of the Work Credit Program for another two years? Merci, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The extension was a procedural one. We have moved forward with that. It was based on recommendations from the Mine Advisory Board, consultation with the Chamber of Mines, and numerous companies that are involved in the mineral industry, and it is consistent with our mandate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks to the Minister for that. How we learned about it has become a pattern through news releases, but the news release boasts about the 2015-17 implementation period for the Work Credit Program, how it is going to save exploration companies \$725,000. That is money that should have been spent in the Northwest Territories to generate more activity. Why would the Minister extend this program that saves companies money that should have been spent in the Northwest Territories, to the benefit of our citizens?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: The rationale for the extension is, in fact, the overall state of the financing and exploration sector remains the same. As we all know, the market conditions are tight, and we are trying to attract new mining people to the Northwest Territories to spend their money. We still need to overcome the perception of the Northwest Territories being a difficult place to do business, and this is one of the avenues that we see that can attract investments.

MR. O'REILLY: There is a potential for a conflict of interest when the Mineral Industry Advisory Board provides advice to the Minister generally, and in this specific case of the Work Credit Program, what is the Minister prepared to do to deal with this issue of potential for a conflict of interest and to improve transparency around the recommendations he gets from this board?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Actually, I have met with the Mineral Advisory Board and one of the first things I had done is I have actually put a pause and disbanded the board for now. I have met with them since then, but not as a board but as individuals, moving forward and getting their advice. I will continue to have a look at how this board operates and how it suits the Mineral Development Strategy of the Northwest Territories moving forward.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Mr. Speaker. Well, that certainly comes as a surprise. I look

forward to trying to work with the Minister moving forward on this, and hopefully he will work with the standing committee, as well. We do have another model at hand in the Yukon, where there is a more transparent and accountable way of receiving advice from the mining industry. Is the Minister prepared to review how this happens in the Yukon and elsewhere, to ensure that the advice he may receive from such a board is more inclusive of other interests, free of potential conflicts of interest, and publicly report it? Merci, Mr. Speaker.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, I have disbanded the board, and have been having a look at how this thing works and how it is going to best suit the residents in the Northwest Territories. I would love to sit down and have a conversation with the Member on some advice, moving forward.