

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

**QUESTION 762-18(2): GIANT MINE OVERSIGHT BOARD PUBLIC MEETING
ISSUES**

May 26, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I spoke earlier today about Giant Mine Oversight Board's recent report and public meeting. I'd like to follow up with the Minister of Environment on some of those issues.

For many years, Yellowknife Dene First Nation Elders and others in this community have called for an apology and compensation for the impacts of the Giant Mine. The board has taken this up in recommending a federal response to the calls for an apology and compensation. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know from the Minister what is the position of our government on the issue of an apology and compensation, and has this been raised with the federal government? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

HON. ROBERT C. MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the legacy arising from the history of Giant Mine is complex and that it's very emotional. We understand that the Giant Mine regional offices have met with the Yellowknife Dene First Nations to hear concerns directly in order to develop a formal response. The Member is right. There was some that was recommended by the Giant Mine or by the report, and, as a Legislation Assembly, we should have our internal discussion to come up with a formal position. To the Member's question, that, in my understanding, has not been raised with the federal government yet, but we are having FPTs this summer, and I will use that opportunity to raise the issue with my federal counterpart.

MR. O'REILLY: I'd like to thank the Minister for his response, and I would welcome the opportunity to have this House work with regular MLAs to develop a position on an apology and compensation and, I think, a motion on it. But I'd like to know whether our government has a position on the replacement of lapsed funds from the first two years of operation of the board. That money should have gone into the Giant Mine Oversight Board's research program, so can our Minister tell us what our position is on the replacement of funds and whether he has formally raised it with the federal Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, first of all we are supportive of the surplus funds going to research programs. I'm not sure if there was a mechanism in the agreement that had allowed for that, and I will raise that again.

We do have some FPTs that are coming up this summer. We have the finance Ministers' FPT, as well as the Ministers of the Environment. It is our understanding, though, that INAC is actively working on a solution to address the concerns that were raised, but, again, at the earliest opportunity, I will raise these issues with my federal counterparts.

MR. O'REILLY: Again, I thank the Minister for his strong words there, and I'm happy to work with him on that. We've just got to make sure that, as the federal government moves forward with the Federal Treasury Board's submissions, the replacement money is part of that.

During the meeting last week there was a lot of concern and frustration over the lack of a coordinated response to off-site arsenic contamination throughout Yellowknife and the surrounding environment. Recent media reports seem to show that our health staff do not seem to get information from Environment and Natural Resources. Can the Minister explain what our government is doing with regard to off-site arsenic contamination in the Yellowknife area and how we can have a better coordinated response from our government as a whole?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, we had a meeting recently with Health Canada and the INAC regional office, Environmental and Climate Change Canada, Department of Fisheries, and ENR and we do recognize that there may have been some -- the communication was not as good as it should have been, and I think we've taken steps to address that. We're working more closely with Health and Social Services to address this and to make sure that all their information is up-to-date and correct, and we will provide them up-to-date information.

So I can assure the Member and members of the public that this government is working very closely within the departments to ensure that we are up-to-date and getting the information out there.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'd like to thank the Minister for recognizing that there was an issue and that there are some steps being taken to better coordinate a response.

During the public meeting last week, though, people were glad to see that there is going to be a human health monitoring program for the Giant Mine remediation project, but people also want to make sure that there's going to be a look at health impacts, so I want to ask the Minister: As the lead department on the Giant Mine remediation, can the Minister tell us about what our government involvement is in the human health monitoring program and whether there will be a human health impact study? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Mr. Speaker, ENR is part of a project team that has been leading the development of the human health monitoring program, and I believe Dr. Rory Chan is working on this. An advisory committee was established, and GNWT's Health and Social Services Office of the Public Health Representative sits as a member of the advisory committee providing expert advice and direction.

The Giant Mine Remediation Project team, we're going to be putting together a socio-economic strategy. Its implementation is being designed to address socio-economic impact from the Giant Mine Project, and the upcoming study will be done by the project team who will examine indirect health impacts, as well. So I think the work has already started, and we will continue to update Members of this Assembly on the work that

we're doing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.