

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

**BILL 2:
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES)
NO. 3, 2017-2018, EXECUTIVE AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS
(TUKTOYAKTUK HIGHWAY PREPAREDNESS)**

October 19, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Earlier this week, actually, the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment made a statement about the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk highway. In there, he said that ITI was working to position residents and business in the Beaufort Delta region to capitalize on economic opportunities from year-round road access. That led me to believe that ITI was sort of in charge of this part of this project and that they would be funding tourism-related activities and capacity building and so on. Why is this \$100,000 amount appearing in the Executive and Indigenous Affairs Department? It seems highly unusual that it would come through that department rather than either ITI or Department of Infrastructure. Can someone explain why this is coming through the Executive? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my understanding is this is cross-departmental money. The place we decided to put it through was Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Okay. Are there additional funds that are coming from this government to assist with community capacity building and getting ready for tourism and so on, or is this it? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this funding is to provide Tuktoyaktuk Community Corporation to use to help prepare for the impacts and take advantage of opportunity as a result of the opening of the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk highway.

As far as other investments on the road itself, I believe those would be infrastructure investments. I would have to confirm with the infrastructure Minister to see if there was any other investment going towards that. I know the money has been allocated for the construction of the road, and that is the Department of Infrastructure's responsibility. This money is to help the Community Corporation get ready.

As far as the tourism side of it goes, I really cannot answer that. I may have to refer to the Premier.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McLeod. Would the Premier like to answer?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Yes, thank you. This is a request from the Community Corporation, who was seeking matching money from the federal government as well. This will be to give them the capacity to access additional funding to get ready for the opening of the highway and anticipated increase in activities in the community. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Premier. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. That is helpful information. I am just wondering if someone can explain, then, to me why this is not really in the O and M budget, and why this is not really part of the regular project planning for something like a new highway. Can someone explain why this is not part of the regular project funding and in the O and M budget? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The request came from the community leadership in Tuktoyaktuk. Had we received the request in time, I am sure it would have made its way into the operations budget for 2017-2018, but because we had received it after we had debated the budget, we decided to put it into the supplementary. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Just before somebody tries to say that I don't support the road or that I don't support tourism or that I don't support communities, which I am sure somebody is going to try to accuse me of at some point, I do believe that the community needs to be supported in getting ready for this project. I just question the very highly unusual way of doing this through the Executive, through a supplementary appropriation, rather than as part of proper project planning. This sort of one-off request, I think, opens the door for other kinds of one-off requests that may come forward. Can we expect that there is going to be a similar application for funding, say, from the Inuvik Community Corporation or the Town of Inuvik to help them get prepared for this highway and the benefits that it could bring? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, no, I recognize that the Member supports this project and the benefit that it is going to bring, and we appreciate that very much. As far as anticipating any requests coming from Inuvik, I cannot speak for the leadership of Inuvik, but Inuvik has been at the end of a major highway for a long time. They have had opportunities to prepare and be ready for any influx of visitors that they have, and I think they have demonstrated this in the past. I do not anticipate a request coming from them, but I cannot speak for them as well. They have had experience being at the end of a road. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I have spoken about the unusual nature of this funding coming through the Executive and not part of the O and M budget, not part of the regular project planning. What kind of assurance can I get from the Minister that, when it comes to

other road projects, whether it is Whati or whatever, that these sorts of costs and proper project planning are going to become part of the normal cycle of developing a plan for similar projects in the future, like the Whati or the Tlicho all-season road? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister McLeod.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would think that, with the new projects, we would do some consultation with the community, and we will make them aware that, if they have any initiatives that they want to put forward for consideration as the road opens or as they experience a lot of visitors, we will inform them to get their requests in early, and that way we can go through the regular planning process. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you. I appreciate that commitment from the Minister to look at how we can better build community capacity with regard to these sorts of projects as part of the regular project planning cycle.

I still maintain and want to go on the record as being concerned about the one-off nature of this appropriation, the very highly unusual way that it is coming through the executive, through a supplementary appropriation, rather than as regular O and M, and I think this opens the door to other interests coming forward to our government for special requests for money.

I will give one example: the Northern Frontier Visitors Centre has been closed in Yellowknife, and this is the sort of support that could have been offered or been made available to keep that facility open, but when I tried to get the Minister to look at this, he would not do it. I will just leave it at that. Thanks, Mr. Chair.