

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

MINERAL RESOURCES ACT: WHAT WE HEARD

February 13, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Tomorrow is Valentine's Day, and I am starting to get that feeling. I love mining, as long as it is properly managed and we get our fair share. Unfortunately, that is not what we got yesterday from the Minister of Mining when he tabled the "What We Heard" report on the Mineral Resources Act.

Rather than a good summary of what was submitted, it is a classic example of regulatory capture. Regulatory capture happens when a government agency, created to act in the public interest, instead advances the commercial concerns or interests of the industry or sector it is charged with regulating.

Most of the input provided to ITI during its public engagement is boiled down into almost unintelligible bullets that do not provide any detail. ITI has not posted the written submissions. Rather than a good summary of what many stakeholders submitted, the "What We Heard" report seems to have been cherry-picked from submissions to suit the department's views as a promoter of mineral development. Many comments from stakeholders are categorized improperly, taken out of context, or the main points are not presented at all. Something as basic as moving the responsibility for mineral rights administration to the Department of Lands to avoid bias and conflict of interest is not even mentioned.

No further information is provided on best practices or lessons learned from other jurisdictions, despite a promise by the Minister to do so on October 19 in a public briefing to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment. ITI's "cross-jurisdictional reviews and extensive policy research" should have easily allowed for this information to be made available to the public.

There is no clear indication in the report whether there will be any further public engagement as promised by the Minister at the public briefing and even yesterday here on the floor of this House.

An ITI-commissioned international benchmarking study and other research show GNWT is not collecting enough revenue from mining. While I have gone on record as asking the department to take the time to get it right, delaying the review of royalties and taxation from mining will cost our territory literally tens of millions of dollars of lost revenue. No details on this royalty review are provided in the document, and it was very disappointing to hear the Minister say yesterday that this important work is not likely to take place during this Assembly. Why did we bother to get devolution when something as fundamental as how much money the public gets from resource extraction is not going to be reviewed? Why should Ottawa give us any more authority when we won't even exercise what we have?

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Mining Minister later today. Mahsi.