

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Prairie Creek Mine
Committee of the Whole—2018-2019 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Lands—February 22, 2017

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the comments from the Minister and the deputy minister. It is something that I am going to continue to watch very closely. I want to ask about inspections at Prairie Creek. There were some issues there. I know that there were some additional inspections that were done in the fall. The company was supposed to be submitting some plans for moving forward. Has that actually happened, and where are we at with the existing liabilities at the site? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, I understand that, of course, there are ongoing concerns about Prairie Creek and possible noncompliance. Perhaps I can give some detail as to what the department has been doing. Since the summer of 2017, there have been six inspections by our inspectors from the Department of Lands and also by the Department of Natural Resources. There were six inspections, as I say, the most recent being October 28, 2017. The next inspection will take place in the spring of 2018, once the snow clears. The site is closed, shut down, for the season. Now, there were some compliance issues related to chemical storage. Perhaps I will turn it over at this point to Mr. Hagen, and he can expand on that answer. Thank you.

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, that is correct. There were some issues relating to chemical storage being raised by our inspectors, but, the company, we are working with them. Our first goal with our inspectors is to educate and be of assistance and the last being enforcement and compliance. They have made great progress addressing these issues. They have provided us with a response to inspector's concerns, information request from this past year, including a waste disposal plan, a chemical inventory, and we are currently reviewing some of these documents. We are in constant touch with them, corresponding, and we will be doing a follow-up inspection once the snow is gone, like the Minister mentioned, in the spring of 2018. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Hagen, Minister Sebert. Let's not forget to go through the chair as we continue. Minister Sebert wanted to add something.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I just wanted to add that inspection reports related to land use permits and water licences are available on the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board's registry.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Minister for that. Something that I do check once in a while is the public registry there. I appreciate the concentration of effort on that particular location because it is a problem, and I am glad to hear that there is some progress being made. I want to ask about: ENR has water use inspectors; they also do wildlife inspections, and Lands does land use permits, land lease, and I

understand some of those inspectors are actually cross-appointed. Has there been any thought to centralizing inspection service and putting it with ENR, where, in my view, it should probably be located? I know I raised this with the Minister during business planning, as well, so has he had a chance to look at this? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, as the Member pointed out, people are cross-appointed, and, prior to devolution, basically, these functions were carried out by a single department. It would seem to make some sense to have them combined, but maybe I will let Mr. Hagen take it from there. I understand what the Member is talking about. I know that different inspectors do work closely together and some are cross-appointed, so hopefully the system is not rendered inefficient by the fact that there are two departments, but I do understand the point.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This question has been asked of our Minister and the Minister of ENR a couple of times on putting the inspectors in a single department. I believe it has been looking and is still being studied. I can say from the Department of Lands that we work very well with the Department of ENR, who have the water inspectors, and we have not had any complications. Would it be more efficient? I think by year end that we should have some answers on the efficiencies of having it under one roof or in one department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Hagen. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, I appreciate the Minister's comments and the deputy minister's, as well. Before devolution, it was one department. Now it is split between two, and I do not think necessarily that there are any complications, but we might get some more efficiencies if it was brought back under one roof. I appreciate that they are going to look at that. Hopefully, they can come back to the Regular Members and let us know what they found. Is that something the Minister can commit to do? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, I can commit to that. Thank you.