

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Territorial Parks Season Extension
Committee of the Whole—2017-2018 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Industry, Tourism and Investment—February 26, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I can vouch for some of those parks on the other side of the lake because I've stayed in all of them, but there are some great parks on this side of the lake, as well: Fred Henne, Prelude, Reid Lake, all of which our family has used. Where is the department looking at in terms of keeping some of those open longer into the fall? Part of the reason I raise this is they already do it in the Yukon. They have tremendous road traffic through there. I use their parks past the usual closing date, and, from what I've seen and understand, they get great usage of those parks even into October. What are we looking at doing for the parks on this side of the lake, and was that included in the tender documents that went out as an option? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is my microphone working? Can you hear?

First of all, we have to take this into context because, if we go down this road, this is going to cost the territorial government a significant amount of money. We have a limited amount of capital within the ITI budget to do this across a territory-wide initiative. One of the things I think that we'd have to even consider before we end up doing this -- and we are doing some stuff in the North Slave, around the winter Aurora there, keeping our parking lots open and washroom facilities and such, and that's costing us some extra money.

When you start looking at a territory-wide initiative to do this, we're talking like probably millions of dollars to be able to transition to keeping these things open in the wintertime. These buildings aren't made to winter specification. They're made for seasonal operations but also for value for money. Some of these parks are not going to have any types of visitors, next to nothing probably, in some of them, depending on where they're located. This would be an initiative that would have to have a very serious look at to even consider doing this.

I didn't say we were going to keep them open longer than Hay River region, but I wanted to have a feeling of what it would cost to keep these things open for a couple of weeks, maybe. That's why I asked the Member from Hay River North what kind of a time frame is he talking. Are we talking a couple of weeks here, or are we talking about three or four months? There's a big difference in this type of initiative and the cost that would be associated with it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the Minister's boundless enthusiasm for this idea. Look, I'm not asking for the entire park system to be open all winter, but maybe you can start with a few pilot projects, having two or three different parks open at

least three or four weeks or something into the fall, and then you can look at maybe some other options. Can the Minister commit to come to committee with a few options that might be costed out to look at piloting this idea of extending the season? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I won't agree to that, but I think what I would agree to, I think, because we've already done a pilot project, is on the Deh Cho region. We've just done it in the Blackstone this year. Maybe let the department pull that information together and see what the value for money we got. How many people actually went in the extended season? What did it cost us to do that? It will give us some idea at least on one particular park what it's cost us to do just in one region.

For the north side of the lake, we've also had our North Arm Park engagement process, which is that the department's gone out to get feedback on how we can look at maybe changing how we operate things in the North Slave here, and I think we can probably share that if we haven't shared it already with committee going forward on that one, as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let's start with something really small then. How about keeping the boat launch at Fred Henne open past the Labour Day weekend? It's not even part of the park. There's a separate gate. What about starting with something really small like that? This is an area that's well used by Yellowknifers. Can the Minister look at keeping that open into September, later in September, so that residents of Yellowknife can continue to boat on the lake? That's something really small. I don't think that's going to cost a lot of money, but let's hear what the Minister has to say. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, we can certainly look at doing an initiative like that. Like I said, we'll post some numbers together on this pilot project that we did in the Blackstone there, in the Fort Simpson Territorial Park, and get some of that information to committee as well, too. Thank you, Mr. Chair.