

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

**QUESTION 269-18(3):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES SPONSORED SPEAKER AT
2018 AME ROUNDUP CONFERENCE**

MARCH 15, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Earlier today I quoted a speaker sponsored by government at the recent 2018 Roundup conference. One of his messages was to not waste time on negotiations on treaties or land rights. Can our Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment who sponsored this talk tell us whether Cabinet is of the position that negotiations on treaties and land rights are a waste of time? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member knows that's not our position. The number one priority of this government is land claims and settling outstanding land claims and self-government agreements in the territory. That's a position that the speaker took. That's his position. We have our position and we work closely with all Aboriginal governments to move things along. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I'm really pleased to hear the Minister say that. This speaker who was sponsored by our government described environmental organizations as being non-Canadian, well-funded, with large offices in foreign countries, that tried to divide communities to stop economic development and instigate violence. Can the Minister tell the public whether there is any evidence that any of these organizations operate in the Northwest Territories, and if so, has their criminal activity been reported to the RCMP?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: No, I do not believe that we have had those types of activities in the Northwest Territories. What I can tell this House is our government works closely with NGOs on a regular basis. My department, in particular, has worked very closely with NGOs. In fact, our department has engaged directly with NGOs on natural resource legislation initiatives that we are bringing forward. We will continue to do so.

MR. O'REILLY: I would like to thank the Minister for that, again, that he doesn't share the views of the speaker although he sponsored the talk.

Our civil societies organizations in northern Canada have made tremendous contributions to our society. Some recent examples include the cooperative work and legal action to uphold the Yukon Umbrella Final Agreement and to protect the Peel Land Use Plan and the work here in Yellowknife that has resulted in a legally binding oversight in research development covering Giant Mine or remediation. Can the Minister tell us whether he recognizes the value and work performed by civil society, including environmental organizations in the Northwest Territories?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: This is Canada. Everyone gets to have their say. We

believe everyone should be engaged in our processes, as open and as transparent as we can be. I think we are probably more and open transparent than any government in Canada. We will continue to move on that.

We are always open to all kinds of comments, no matter if it's legislation or public policy or what we are moving forward, but we are always open. We are not saying that criticism is a bad thing. Sometimes we need reflection on some of what we are doing and we take all comments seriously.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My last question for the Minister: I stated earlier today that it's my view that it was very disturbing that our government would sponsor this individual to give such an inaccurate, divisive, and hateful account of civil society. I wonder whether this is something that we can expect from our government in the future. I would like to know from the Minister whether it's the intention of our government to continue to sponsor such misinformation or whether we can expect a more balanced approach in the future. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: This individual who we had speaking at this event is someone that I think has an opinion. He had an opinion. He brought his opinion to us, but let's make something quite clear: this is an Indigenous person. He was an Indigenous leader in BC, of an Indigenous government. He is in the public government. He was a Cabinet Minister and now he is an MLA within the BC legislature. He brought his views to the table around industry and development, and try to get his people out of poverty and in having an economy in his area. His comments were taken. In fact, the Member says, if we would like to open up our views to be wide open, I would like to ask the Member if he would like maybe to speak a round next year at one of our events. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.