

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 285-18(3): CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

MAY 24, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure, who also chairs the Cabinet Committee on Energy and Climate Change. In my Member's statement, I noted how Cabinet's approach to meeting our climate change obligations under the Pan-Canadian Framework has little or no hope for success. Can the Minister provide any justification for how the expansion of the Taltson system will lead to the predicted 44 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, when there is no funding for the project and no buyers for that power? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 227-kilotonne reduction anticipated from the Taltson expansion is the premise of hydro generation and transmission lines to displace any diesel power generation in the Northwest Territories. The Government of the Northwest Territories identified this priority as part of our response to the federal government's Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, along with other energy and transportation priorities. Some of the work that we plan to do includes defining the potential market, capital costs, transmission line routing, and finalizing a business case that would connect sufficient anchor customers to absorb the green hydro power from the Taltson project. The electricity generated by this project can be used to support future industrial growth and a renewable energy source to offset diesel power generation and emissions. We are looking to the federal government to support this preconstruction work going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. I don't feel that much more confident that that is actually going to result in greenhouse gas reductions.

In my Member's statement, I also referred to the fact that the specific target of greenhouse gas reductions for the industrial sector of 17 per cent was removed from the final version of the Climate Change Strategic Framework, no explanation, no rationale provided. I have raised in this House the need for a multi-stakeholder climate change roundtable with Ministerial leadership to secure industry buy-in. Can the Minister explain why there is no target for industrial greenhouse gas emissions and how we can possibly meet the pan-Canadian framework reductions without such a target?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: In terms of industrial targets, the specific emission reduction target of 89 kilotonnes for industry is identified in the graphic shown, actually, on page 32 of the Climate Change Strategic Framework. This target for industry is part of the overall 517-kilotonne reduction target for the NWT to be achieved by 2030 through the strategic objectives and actions outlined in the 2030 Energy Strategy.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is working on a Climate Change Strategic Framework Action Plan, which they expect to finalize later this year.

MR. O'REILLY: I would like to thank the Minister for that and the information about how that figure is hidden in a graphic rather than set out clearly in the strategy itself.

I have raised the issue of poor communications around climate change planning and the surprise addition of the specific and large reductions to greenhouse gas emissions attributed to Taltson expansion. We don't even know what the carbon pricing system is going to be, or how that fits into our climate change initiatives either. Can the Minister tell the public and Regular MLAs whether the Energy Strategy and Climate Change Strategic Framework, or some compilation of these documents, has been submitted to the federal government for consideration in meeting our Pan-Canadian Framework obligations on greenhouse gas reductions and what the response has been from the federal government?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: As all Members are well aware, we announced all three of these together. The 2030 Climate Change Strategic Framework, the 2030 Energy Strategy, and the Petroleum Strategy, as they are all linked together, were publicly released here in the Assembly on May 1, 2018.

Various federal officials have already been made aware of it. To date, the GNWT has not received any formal feedback from any federal Ministers at this point, but the response that we have had from federal people so far has been very positive, and they are pleased that we are doing our part to meet the Pan-Canadian Framework targets.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Minister for that, and I look forward if he could share some of that information with this side of the House in the future in a regular update.

The Auditor General noted the failure of our government to provide adequate leadership through appropriate authority and procedures to ensure we meet climate change targets. I have noted the need for a Climate Change Act, Financial Management Board consideration of climate change implications in its decisions, and how infrastructure projects should be prioritized in terms of their greenhouse gas reductions. It is not clear when Cabinet is going to get serious about providing the appropriate authority and procedures to implement our climate change efforts.

I would like to ask the Minister: what specific changes to authorities and procedures is Cabinet going to make to ensure climate change success, and when will this happen? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: The government is working on the development of a 2019-2023 Action Plan to guide the implementation of the 2030 Climate Change Strategic Framework, and this document will address the Auditor General's recommendations not already incorporated into the framework. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.