

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 369-18(3): NWT ECONOMIC SYMPOSIUM

October 12, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. [English translation not provided.]

My questions are for the Premier, about the recent NWT Economic Symposium. When the Premier answered questions in the House on March 1, he said that "the purpose of the summit is to seek input into the writing of the NWT chapter of the Arctic Policy Framework."

Can the Premier explain how this event morphed into a discussion of non-renewable resource development projects in infrastructure corridors? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The economic symposium, or better known as the NWT Economic Symposium, was funded using retained resource revenues from the intergovernmental council, which all intergovernmental council members fully supported. Three participants from each Indigenous government were funded. Many brought additional participants who were funded directly from their intergovernmental offices' budgets.

The costs are still being calculated by the symposium and will be provided once the calculations are done. The Member dismisses the discussions as only being about infrastructure, but the discussions were what was important to the Aboriginal leaders of the Northwest Territories, and I wouldn't belittle those discussions.

MR. O'REILLY: Of course, I'm going to take issue with what the Premier said there. I had intended no disrespect whatsoever to our Indigenous governments. I'm talking about the lack of communications about this event with this side of the House. The Premier promised on March 1st that this meeting would be about economic diversification, the meeting would be inclusive, and that experts from various sectors would be involved.

Can the Premier explain whether the symposium was inclusive, with representation from various economic sectors and experts?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Generally, he who pays the bill calls the tune. Along with Indigenous leaders and economic development representatives, there was a facilitator who is an expert in economic research and analysis in attendance.

MR. O'REILLY: I would like to thank the Premier for that information. It would have been helpful to have gotten it ahead of time, of course. He said that he would be pleased to discuss the event with committees, and we should at least have a discussion of it, referring to involvement of Regular MLAs in the symposium.

I don't recall any such discussion, and we only got notice of it less than a week in advance through the weekly ministerial activity media release. Can the Premier explain

why Regular MLAs were not involved in the symposium, and why he did not fulfill the commitments he made in March in this House?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: As I said, the symposium is being funded by retained earnings from the Intergovernmental Council. It was focused on the Aboriginal leaders. The focus of the symposium was seeking input and agreement from our partners, NWT Indigenous governments, that the NWT economy needs urgent attention.

The symposium was in support of implementing the priorities of the Legislative Assembly to grow and diversify the Northwest Territories economy and work more closely with Indigenous governments. It was not about identifying new priorities.

Through the discussion, we identified concrete plans and actions to stimulate the Northwest Territories economy by leveraging the individual resources and authorities of participating Indigenous governments and organizations in coordination with the Government of the Northwest Territories.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Thanks to the Premier for that. The only public information about this symposium is a one-page communique. We have little idea of who was actually there, how much it cost, whether there will be some photo report of this event, and of course, all of this was done with zero input from this side of the House.

Can the Premier table in this House, before the end of the sitting, the cost of the event, a list of participants, and a full report of what transpired to help inform the debate and discussion? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: A summary report of the symposium presentations, discussions, and outcomes are being prepared and will be shared with the symposium participants. This report will also be shared publicly once the participants have reviewed it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.