

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS AND BENEFITS

October 30, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Yesterday I tabled a 2017 report contracted by the Industry, Tourism and Investment Department called "Policies for Generating Socioeconomic Benefits from Natural Resource Extraction Projects." This report shows how jurisdictions around the world make sure their citizens get a fair share of benefits from non-renewable resources extraction.

Unfortunately, this report was received by the ITI 18 months ago was only recently posted deep on the department's website because I forced this government to make it public through an access to information request. Committee was not even informed of the existence of this report until the Minister disclosed it in an April 17 public meeting where he presented on socioeconomic agreements.

The report examines exactly the issues that play in our development of a Mineral Resources Act. Public groups asked for this type of information during the MRA consultations process. Regular MLAs have repeatedly requested the Minister share the extensive cross-jurisdictional research his department claims to have done, but he has refused to provide this information.

The 2017 ITI-commissioned report is packed with detailed information on the types of instruments jurisdictions used to capture social and economic benefits for their citizens. It analyzes the different types of benefits, employment, contracting, capacity development, impact mitigation, new infrastructure, and does a provincial-territorial-international scan of other approaches. Why was this information suppressed?

This report is a good one, and I call on this government to pursue much stronger socioeconomic agreements. These improvements should include requirements for binding and enforceable employment in contracting targets with penalties, locating offices and professional support in the Northwest Territories, and investments in research and development, training, and post-secondary education. Other jurisdictions tie the provision of such benefits to security of tenure and approvals for development. We should and must do much better.

The development of a new Mineral Resources Act and the amendments to our oil and gas legislation provide an ideal opportunity to build the framework of improved retention of benefits for our residents.

I'll have questions for the Minister of Industry on what other materials may be outstanding, and how these recommendations will inform our post-devolution resource management moving forward. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.