

KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE
Wekweeti Management Area Land Use Plan
Committee of the Whole—2019-2020 Operating Budget Review
Dept. of Lands—March 7, 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I would like to start with questions about the allocation in here for land use planning in the Wekweeti management area. There is \$647,000 in the Department of Lands and another \$79,000 in Department of Infrastructure. Can the Minister tell us what this money is actually for? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The monies are primarily to set up the foundation for a land use plan in the public land areas of the Wekweeti region, and there is a land use plan there that the Tlicho government have done under private lands, which is different from the other regions that have a land use plan. They did a land use plan for the whole region. The responsibility for paying for the plan is the federal government's, as the legislation comes out of the MVRMA, which is federal legislation. This money we have is to set up an office in Behchoko and have an executive director in Yellowknife. We are setting the stage, working with a partner, with the Tlicho government, and in anticipation of the federal government funding the land use plan, which they have done in every single region that has a plan, including the Deh Cho, who have been at it for about 15 years, and the feds have funded that, primarily. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, that is great. Why are we spending the money to do land use planning? Why is this not the federal government? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Unfortunately, if we waited for the federal government, we would never have a land use plan, so, by going forward the way we are going, get their attention, we have the Tlicho government, who obviously have a constitution of protected land claim agreement and it speaks to having a land use plan in the region. So we are not going to go forward any further than we have to in spending of dollars, but we are having a foundation here, and, in partnership with the Tlicho, we are going to have a position in Behchoko. From this we are hoping and pushing for the feds to come forth with the dollars to complete the land use plan. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Is there any prospect that this money can be recovered from the federal government? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. HAGEN: I'm sorry. I didn't catch his question there. Sorry about that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Is there any prospect that this money could be

recovered from the federal government?

MR. HAGEN: Sorry, I missed that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I will allow Mr. O'Reilly to re-ask his question. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Is there any way we can get this money back from the federal government? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Mr. Chair, my apologies. We could sure try. I don't see it happening. We do have some obligations in the Department of Lands to go forward. We are a partner. There are three partners in this plan. We do have to put some, for lack of a better word, I guess, some "skin in the game" here to get it kick-started, and that is what we are doing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I don't want the witnesses to get the impression that I don't believe in land use planning. That is actually what brought me to the Northwest Territories in 1985. I became the land use planning coordinator for the Dene nation and actually spent some time working with Violet Camsell-Blondin and a whole bunch of other people, Michael Nadli, and so on, so this is what actually got me up here, and I want this to be done. I just am trying to understand why we are getting out in it ahead of the federal government. It is their responsibility to fund this. I understand there is a need for land use planning, but can someone just explain why there is so much urgency that we are going to spend \$1.5 million on land use planning in this area before you can even get the feds to the table to agree to it? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I think, Mr. Chair, that we obviously, along with the Member, regard the land use planning as critical and therefore are willing to commit resources to the establishment of a planning office and senior representative. As we have mentioned, the planning process, I think part of it, and I will let Mr. Hagen expand on my answer, is that we feel that it is necessary for someone to go ahead and that that is why we have decided to step up to the plate, but perhaps Mr. Hagen can expand on that answer. Thank you.

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

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Like I said five minutes ago, if we waited for the federal government, I think it would be a lot of years before they came to the table. We found this through other land use plans. If we start the process, which we are doing, it is a mandate item in the 18th Assembly to start land use planning, and, if we start it off, then, of course, we set the goals and we have the plan, and, hopefully at the end of the day -- they don't necessarily have to participate. We just need \$5 million to complete the Tlicho land use plans. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Is there no provision within the Tlicho agreement for taking an issue to arbitration to force the federal government to pay for this? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you. I frankly don't know if there is or not, but I am advised by Mr. Hagen that he doesn't think there is.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I would hope that the department would look into that. Can someone tell me: how much is the Tlicho government contributing to this effort? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. HAGEN: To my knowledge, they are not putting in any money for it. They did put some dollars in, along with the federal government, for doing a land use plan on their private lands, but they are putting very little into this process, although they are a full partner in it. They are cooperating. They have, obviously, all of the knowledge that is required for the traditional knowledge and the regions that are sacred to them, that should be protected. So their contribution isn't necessarily dollars, but what they are doing is invaluable to ensuring that we get a proper land use plan on public lands. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Okay. Can someone tell me: is the result of this going to be a legally binding land use plan? If so, under what legislation will that authorization lay? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. At the end of the day, it will be legally binding, signed off by the Tlicho government, the Government of the Northwest Territories, and the federal government will sign it, and it will be a legal document. As to legislation, I would have to get back to you on exactly how to see that going forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.