

MEMBER STATEMENT—KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

GIANT MINE REMEDIATION BENEFITS

March 13, 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Earlier this week I attended the annual public meeting held by the Giant Mine Remediation Project staff. A lot of work was required to contain and manage arsenic trioxide waste for at least the next 100 years, to remediate soil, demolish buildings, build and operate a new water treatment facility, and more. A report on the water licence application and process was also provided.

A good deal of the meeting was taken up with discussing opportunities for northern benefits during the decade-long remediation. Contracts valued at \$430 million have been let so far, but most of the remediation work is yet to be costed and contracted and will take years to complete. Giant Mine Remediation Project staff and the main construction management contractor, Parsons Incorporated, pointed to some vague principles and processes to foster northern benefits. Benefits are to be delivered through set-asides under something called the Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Businesses, and there are also criteria for assessing valuation of bids based on Aboriginal training, labour, and equipment ratings under something called the Aboriginal Opportunity Considerations. A socio-economic working group has been established with Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Procurement Canada, Parsons as the main construction manager, and GNWT. They are also working on some sort of a socio-economic action plan. A broader socio-economic advisory body has also been established with similar membership, but it also includes the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and the City of Yellowknife.

In a February 25 letter to the Giant remediation project, the Giant Mine Oversight Board points out the murky relationship between the working group, advisory body, and the action plan. Questions were also raised about membership in some of these groups, and whether the focus will be more broadly cast to include social matters and outcomes. I agree with their assessment, Mr. Speaker.

What is missing is the power to ensure contracts actually go to Indigenous and northern businesses. There are no binding targets for NWT and Indigenous jobs, contracting, or purchasing. There is a lot of effort to make contracting opportunities known, but no way to directly negotiate contracts with local businesses that have demonstrated capacity and performed the work. That's not good enough. I'll have questions later today for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.