

**ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE**

**QUESTION 730-18(3):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES-NUNAVUT BILATERAL MEETING ON  
TRANSBOUNDARY CARIBOU**

**May 27, 2019**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. There were media reports of a meeting between the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources and Nunavut officials in Kugluktuk in April of this year. Can the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources provide some background information on the meeting, such as who was there, and table a copy of the agenda so that we can see what was discussed? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Masi. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During my tour of the Tlicho and speaking to the leadership there, and the Member was part of that tour, I did commit to them that I was going to try to line up a meeting with my counterpart over in Nunavut, and we are fortunate that we were able to see that happen. We did meet in Kugluktuk, as the Member pointed out. There were about six representatives from each side. There was myself and the Minister in Nunavut, who is also the Premier; and we had our two deputy ministers, as well as some technical staff. About 12 people attended the meeting altogether.

What I could do, and I think the Member asked about the agenda, is that I will have a look here. I should be able to table the agenda so that we will have an opportunity to see what was discussed there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that commitment, and I look forward to getting the information. There are no temporary or permanent protection measures in place for key habitats of any of the transboundary barren-ground caribou herds shared by the NWT and Nunavut. Can the Minister tell us what the outcomes were at this meeting, whether there is going to be any protection of caribou calving grounds?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** I thought it was a very positive and productive meeting that we had, and we did come up with an agreement to enhance our caribou research monitoring and management actions. Again, there was recognition of the leadership shown by the Tlicho government on the issue.

This was a fairly high-level political leaders' meeting, along with our technical staff. We had some good discussions on the calving ground, our concern that the calving grounds are in Nunavut, and maybe they didn't have the same regulations or restrictions that we had. They understood that, and they have committed to have a discussion amongst their co-management partners, as well. I did offer to host a meeting here in the capital in the fall. I would like to host that, and they seemed receptive to that. At that time, I want to use that as an opportunity to bring our Aboriginal partners in as well and have a thorough discussion.

I was very encouraged by the outcomes of the meeting. I thought it was a very positive tone and a very sincere recognition that we need to try and do what we can to protect the Bathurst caribou herd.

**MR. O'REILLY:** If everything works out right, maybe I will be at that meeting in the fall.

Cabinet continues to push ahead with planning and spending on an all-weather road into the heart of the range of the Bathurst caribou herd, while there are plans for a similar joint road on the Nunavut side that would pass through the calving grounds of this herd. Can the Minister tell us whether there was any discussion of the road proposals and their obvious detrimental impacts on the Bathurst caribou herd and what the outcomes of those discussions were?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** We did have a lot of discussion, but as far as the road corridors go, we didn't really get into any type of detail or have discussions on the road corridors.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I have raised this issue of caribou in the House many times. The Bathurst caribou herd is in a desperate state, only 8,000 animals, down from a high of 480,000; yet our government has not concluded any extra funding in the 2019-2020 budget for this crisis.

I would like to know from the Minister whether this recent meeting is going to result in any real action to save the Bathurst caribou herd. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** I think that, in the past budget that we just approved, we did put some money into enhancing the Boots on the Ground Program. I think that it is a great program. I think that we put some money in to enhance that. I do believe, with our conversations with our counterparts over in Nunavut, that we will take some steps to help try and protect the Bathurst caribou herd. This was an initial meeting setting a path forward, and I am not sure if they have had these meetings before. We did share with them our concerns and the concerns from the Aboriginal leadership on this side of the border about the restrictions on the Nunavut side. They said that they would have a look at it.

I believe that this is a first step, and again, if we have the meeting in the fall time, and this would be in the fall before the election, obviously, if we were to have the meeting in the fall time, then I think that we will be able to have a broader discussion on plans to do what we can to mitigate the impact being felt by the Bathurst caribou herd. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.