

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 739-18(3): GIANT MINE REMEDIATION PROJECT

May 28, 2019

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Earlier today, I spoke about the poor efforts by the federal government to complete the legally required long-term funding study for Giant Mine. As the lead for GNWT on this file, can the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources tell us what role our government has had with regard to the work on this long-term funding study? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As per measure 6 of the report on the environmental assessment, the Giant Mine Remediation Project team is exploring long-term funding options for the project. The GNWT is a co-proponent on the Giant Mine Remediation Project, and has assisted the project team in exploring options for long-term funding.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. Giant Mine Oversight Board has released a scathing review of the second draft of the study that has been prepared by an accounting firm. I tabled that letter last week in the House. Can the Minister tell the public whether the study meets the requirements of measure 6 from the Giant Mine environmental assessment to provide a full review of long-term funding options, and does the work to date meet our government's interests?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: In regard to measure 6, a draft report was developed in 2017. The project team presented this draft to the Giant Mine working group, and members had outstanding concerns. As a result, a consultant was hired to further develop the report. The project team is working towards finalizing the report and anticipate that this will be complete in 2019 and shared publicly.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. During the original environmental assessment of the Giant Mine Remediation Project, the review board concluded that "there remains a likelihood of significant impacts from the project from risks related to funding." Further, the board recommended that a trust model be investigated for long-term funding. What is the Minister doing to ensure that there is adequate consideration given to a trust fund and other models beyond annual appropriations to fund perpetual care to Giant Mine?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: The report as required under measure 6 investigates options for long-term funding. Discussions on this issue will continue with stakeholders. The northern abandoned mine reclamation program announced their budget in 2019, which will cover the full implementation costs for the project for the next 15 years.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. That is great for the remediation, the active remediation phase, but I am worried about the

long-term funding. Care and maintenance is going to be required at that site forever. The purpose of this study is to try to make sure that that funding is in place. Annual appropriations, people in Ottawa deciding that they are going to fund something in Yellowknife or not, that is not a great place to be. One of the criticisms of the work to date is that it is far behind schedule, is almost two years overdue, and this has the potential to delay water licensing of the project. So what is the Minister and his staff doing to ensure that this study is completed in a timely fashion and that there is an opportunity for the public to review and comment on it?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: As I mentioned, the project team is working towards finalizing the report and anticipate this will be done in 2019 and shared publicly. We do not foresee this work resulting in any delays in the water licensing process. Again, we have a significant interest in this particular project, so I will work with Members of this Assembly to ensure that the interests of the Northwest Territories and the City of Yellowknife are taken into consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.