

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

### QUESTION WHATI TRANSMISSION LINE

August 22 , 2019

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. There are a couple projects here I would like to ask some questions about. What transmission ICIP: can someone tell me whether that is connecting Whati to the existing grid near Behchoko? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the Member's question was in relation to a transmission line to Whati. That would complement the 13-megawatt Lac La Martre hydro project where it was eventually built. Whereas 1.2-megawatt mini-hydro facilities would compound the construction of future 13-megawatt hydro project, a 13-megawatt hydro facility is more cost effective than 1.2-megawatt mini-hydro as per megawatt bases, better serves future growth, and better reduces greenhouse gas emissions than would a mini-hydro facility. I hope that answers some of the Member's questions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Minister McLeod. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Can someone tell me: I have a 2003 pre-feasibility study for hydroelectric on the Lac La Martre River. The predicted base load for the community was 1.2 megawatts. What is the capacity of the power line? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Schumann.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** The capacity of the power line? Wow, you are asking for some serious detail, here. What I will read out here is what I have. The design and construction of the new transmission line from the Snare hydro system to the community of Whati, the transmission line starts from the Snare port substation and spans 60 kilometres to bring hydroelectricity to Whati, where generation is currently supplied from diesel. In 2021, \$5 million work was for the pre-feasibility work to include ground-proofing and transmission-line routing, environmental baseline studies, engineering, and regional engagement and consultation. So I suspect we don't even know the exact size of that line based on that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Why are we building a power line over from Snare to Whati for 13 megawatts of power when a community base load might be, maybe it is 1.2; maybe it has increased a little bit since then. Why are we building something that large to go over to Whati? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** I will respond first, Mr. Chair, through you. Then I will go to Minister Schumann, who the Member's question is for. We appreciate the Member giving us a bit of a heads-up that he was going to be asking some of these technical questions. We tried to get the information together. The one we didn't anticipate was the capacity on the lines, otherwise, we would have had that information, but we tried to get all the other information. Again, we appreciate the heads-up because the Member does ask technical questions, and we need our folks to put that information together. So, if we missed the one on the capacity of the line, then it's on me, and I will go to Minister Schumann through you, Mr. Chair, to expand on the Member's question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Minister McLeod. Minister Schumann.

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I said, we don't know the exact size of the line, yet. That has to be determined by our engagement in our pre-feasibility work, but I suspect we want to build this thing to not only supply the community of Whati and get them off diesel to lower our GHG emissions as part of our strategy going forward, but we also have to take a realistic look at the potential economic development in that region, and we will have to build in some capacity, I believe, to support some of those initiatives going forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. O'Reilly. **MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I see this project is going to take three years. Is there a ballpark figure that I can provide for the cost of this transmission line? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My understanding is that we are still working on the figures. We want to try to be as accurate as possible before we bring those forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Minister McLeod. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. My concern is that the Northwest Territories Hydro Corporation spent over \$1 million looking at hydro potential for the community of Whati over the years, and now we are talking about building a power line over from the Snare system to Whati. That's something that is way larger than the capacity needed for the community.

The information that I got from the hydro tech consultant who did the 2003 feasibility study for the Whati indicated that we can have small hydro projects for Whati, Gameti, and Wekweeti for probably the same cost, if not lower, than the cost of this transmission line and offset a lot more greenhouse gas emissions, provide probably enough electricity to heat those communities and cut the greenhouse gas emissions from them as well. That, to me, seems like a way better investment of money, but I just haven't got a sufficient rationale yet for the Whati transmission line. Is there any further explanation that the Ministers can provide? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. When they built the Mackenzie Valley fibre optic line, I think that we only needed 24 strands in that line to meet our requirements. The Minister of the day said, "How much more would it cost to double it?" They said it wasn't much more, so they doubled it to 48 strands with the anticipation that you have to start thinking about the future. It was going to be less expensive to do it now than to have to build it in the future.

We have one more day in session, and we have another week as Members, and I will commit to the Member that I will talk to the department and the folks that are involved to try to find a rationale for this particular project. Obviously, there is some thought to the future. I am not too familiar with this, and I apologize for that. What I am trying to do is work on a budget that is going to address our future needs and provide some opportunity for the present folks of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Minister McLeod. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I know that I have one minute left on the clock. Is Fortune Minerals paying any of this cost, and is this really to facilitate their development in some way? Is this the Government of the Northwest Territories providing a public subsidy for the development of their project? Is that what this is all about? Could I get an answer? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am not sure. I will have to have those discussions. If there is any kind of opportunity to work with industry that wants to make a profit but, at the same time, provide opportunities for northern people and northern businesses, then we have to work with them. What that consists of, I am not sure at this moment, but I had an idea that this is where this was going. The Member has clearly indicated his non-support of a capital budget of \$417,000,000. That is going to provide opportunities and infrastructure for a lot of the communities across the Northwest Territories that are badly in need of this. Thank you.