

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

### QUESTION 848-18(3): THAIDENE NENE NATIONAL PARK RESERVE

August 22, 2019

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. My understanding is that regulations must be in place to enable final protections for Thaidene Nene. Is this the case, and when will regulations be completed? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh said before, it was a great event that we went to yesterday, and a lot of that came as a result of our passing the Protected Areas Act, so anyone who had anything to do with that should be very proud of how it turned out for the folks in Lutselk'e.

To the Member's question, the signed establishment agreement legally binds the GNWT to establish Thaidene Nene. However, protected areas are formally established under the Protected Areas Act by regulation. Site-specific to Thaidene Nene, skeleton regulations have been drafted to establish Thaidene Nene territorial protected area and will be signed by the Commissioner shortly. The full comprehensive set of regulations will be developed within 18 months of establishment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that. At yesterday's announcement, there were financial commitments made by the Government of Canada, but I'm not aware of any from this government. Can the Minister tell us: what specific capital and operations funding has this government committed towards Thaidene Nene?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** The GNWT has committed \$290,000 annually to the ongoing management of Thaidene Nene. Additionally, as the Member pointed out, they are getting some funding from Canada. These funds will allow the GNT Lutselk'e Dene First Nation, Deninu K'ue First Nation, Yellowknives Dene First Nation, and the Northwest Territories Metis Nation to effectively manage Thaidene Nene for the next four years.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I'm not sure that \$290,000 from our government is going to do it, but I guess that will be up to the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly. I was on the ENR website this morning, and there is now a rudimentary public registry for protected areas. Can the Minister tell us what the plans are to complete a public registry, and when will it be fully functional?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Before I respond to the Member's question, the first question on the funding, there is significant funding coming from Canada as part of their agreements with the local Aboriginal governments on the federal portion of the park, and the \$290,000 is on our portion of the park. They will be significantly funded, and it is going to help with the work going on in the park in the future.

ENR is working towards establishing a new website registry early in the life of the next Legislative Assembly.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Thanks to the Minister for that. As I said in my statement, it's one thing to create a protected area on paper, and it's another to have a vision and a role for protected areas in the NWT economy. Can the Minister explain this government's vision and commitments towards the conservation economy?

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** A lot of the governments across the Northwest Territories have a vision, and we heard from the vision from the folks in Lutselk'e yesterday on 50 years. It was a 50-year vision, a story, and I'll share it today that I noted yesterday was one where it said, a former chief had gone down to Ottawa. They said: "Sign this. We're going to establish a park." The chief says: "I'll go talk to my people first, and we'll think about it." They thought about it for 30 years. That's the vision that they had. They wanted to make sure that they have consulted with their people, and made sure they come up with a product that was good for the people that they represent.

The conservation economy, they support the preservation of biodiversity through the creation of protected areas, and I think we did a lot of work in this government on that. We are protecting wildlife. Needless to say, we are protecting a way of life for Northerners. We are also trying to strengthen local economies in respecting culture and values, and we are committed to work with the Indigenous governments to realize a shared vision, a shared vision toward a strengthening conservation economy. Opportunities and products that support Indigenous economies, eco-tourism developed within protected areas would be a focus. This would benefit local Indigenous government communities and the NWT economy overall by providing local, meaningful employment, new infrastructure, and new local business.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT along with all our partners have a vision for the future of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.