

**ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE**  
**QUESTION 56-19(2): CANTUNG MINE SURFACE LEASE**

**February 11, 2020**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. Forgive me if I look like a prune today, but I want to go back to the issue of the Cantung Mine and Mactung that I raised yesterday. My questions are for the Minister of Lands today, though. GNWT had a surface lease covering the Cantung Mine as a result of devolution. I would like to know whether we have turned that back to the federal government now. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Lands.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canada is fully responsible for the administration of all surface leases and reserves that exist on the Cantung site, including inspections. Administrative arrangements at Cantung are now consistent with other federally managed waste sites under the devolution agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I would like to thank the Minister for that, because I asked many times in the last Assembly about whether that surface lease had been turned back. It sounds like it has; that's good news. I want to know if there are any residual liabilities that accrue to this government as a result of the Cantung Mine, and that includes environmental liabilities.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** The Government of Canada is responsible for the management of the Cantung Mine, including care and maintenance and remediation. The Cantung Mine is a federal area under the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. This means that the GNWT does not have designated authority or hold security for licences and permits.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that. I think that the shorter version of that is that we have no liability for the Cantung site, but I will deal with that offline. I would like to know from the Minister, if I can, why this government, GNWT, accepted the Mactung property as part of the financial security for the Cantung mine when it was in operation.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** The business assets for Mactung tungsten deposits were purchased by the Government of the Northwest Territories in order to recover debts owed to the GNWT under the Cantung reclamation security agreement. The

Government of the Northwest Territories took this approach to preserve the security originally accepted by Canada and to maximize its value.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that response. I don't think he really answered my question, though. I want to know why we accepted Mactung as part of the security arrangement for the Cantung Mine. The previous Minister had full discretion to accept any form of financial security. Why did this government accept the Mactung Mine as part of this financial security? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** It is my understanding that the two properties were there to make sure that the federal government fulfilled their commitment. Part of the devolution agreement that we purchase these two properties to do that. I will make a commitment to the Member to go out and get further information on this because that is my understanding presently. If there is further information, I will get that to him. Thank you.