

MEMBER'S STATEMENT — KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

Socio-Economic Benefits of Giant Mine Remediation Project

June 4, 2020

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, monsieur le President. On May 19th, the Giant Mine oversight board released its fourth annual report. Once again, the failure to deliver socioeconomic benefits to Indigenous peoples and northern residents is front and centre. Since 2005-2006, about \$500 million has been spent on the Giant Mine site. It is estimated that another \$750 million will be spent on future active remediation. After that, annual perpetual care costs are estimated at \$2.35 to \$5.66 million for the next 100 years. This will be the largest-ever government-funded capital project in the Northwest Territories.

Northern employment at the site does not appear to have ever exceeded 50 percent, with less than 20 percent Indigenous. Northern contracting is not much better. The board has been unable to determine whether there are any efforts of capacity-building and ensuring that barriers to local employment or contracting are minimized. Residents continue to express anxiety about whether they will be able to take full advantage of the employment and business opportunities that will increase when full site remediation begins in 2021. There is still no plan to ensure northern benefits from remediation at Giant Mine. No one seems to take any responsibility for pushing this forward, including this government.

The board concluded that the challenge is rooted in the absence of an effective and experienced champion to carry these messages forward and coordinate them to an effective end. It is now recommended that a special envoy be appointed by the federal government to coordinate the development and implementation of a socioeconomic strategy, monitor the outcomes of the two socioeconomic committees, and negotiate changes as required; report directly to the relevant federal and territorial Ministers and make those findings public in an annual report; facilitate information-sharing with the broader Yellowknife community; and finally, facilitate discussions on project-related reconciliation.

The special envoy would have significant experience in government relations, cross-cultural issues, and negotiating complex issues. It is recommended that significant resources will be made available to ensure the success of this position and that it should be located in Yellowknife. I will have questions later today for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, who has the lead on the Giant Mine for GNWT, on whether we can expect to realize real socioeconomic benefits from this project. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.