

## RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION —KEVIN O'REILLY MLA FRAME LAKE

14-19(2):

### CONTRACTS FOR WORK RELATED TO THE TALTSON HYDRO EXPANSION

October 15, 2020

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question 14-19(2), asked by the Member for Frame Lake on June 10, to the Minister of Infrastructure, regarding contracts for work related to the Taltson hydro expansion.

A request was made to provide details of all the contracts entered into by the Government of the Northwest Territories for work related to the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project, including studies on submarine transmission lines, from September 1, 2015, to present, indicating whether any of the contractors were or are registered under the Business Incentive Policy. There was an additional question about planned actions to maximize northern employment, training, and business opportunities in future contracts related to the project.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the Member's first two questions, later today, at the appropriate time, I will table the detailed list of the contracts entered into by the Government of the Northwest Territories for work related to the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project, including whether the contractors' Business Incentive Policy status received any consideration in the evaluation of the proposals or bids.

Through the public procurement process, the Government of the Northwest Territories supports territorial and local content through the application of the Business Incentive Policy. To date, contracts entered into for the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project have been very specialized and technical in nature. The Business Incentive Policy was applied in each competitive contract evaluation. Sole-source contracts and contribution agreements do not include the Business Incentive Policy as part of the selection process.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of the method of procurement taken for each specific project-related activity, the Government of the Northwest Territories strives to maximize the benefits to local residents and businesses from the project. For example, the two contribution agreements entered into with the Arctic Research Foundation to complete specialized studies on Great Slave Lake exemplify how the Government of the Northwest Territories and the project partners are working to maximize local benefits, even for procurement falling outside of the Business Incentive Policy. These studies will provide a wealth of hydrographic data, including detailed mapping, soil sampling, and lake-bottom profiling. Arctic Research Foundation's work was supported by local equipment, labour, guides, and boat crews, and was used as an opportunity to host local and Indigenous youth through the Northern Youth Leadership Program to develop leadership and life skills. Over a period of two seasons of work, the Arctic Research Foundation has spent \$900,000 on northern content.

Regarding the Member's third question, the Government of the Northwest Territories is advancing the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project with the Akaitcho Dene First Nations, the Northwest Territory Metis Nation, and the Salt River First Nation as project

partners through a memorandum of understanding that is expected to be signed shortly.

Mr. Speaker, the MOU will allow the four parties to work together to ensure northern employment, training, and business opportunities are maximized by using a collaborative approach to project development. In the lead-up to the signing of the MOU, the three Indigenous groups have, over the last three years, collectively received \$350,000 in funding to support their participation on a project working group and steering committee as part of the establishment of the MOU.

Much of the work completed for the Taltson hydro expansion to date has been of a highly technical nature, requiring the support of specialty consultant firms. As the project moves beyond technical design and towards baseline fieldwork, regulatory approvals, procurement, and construction, the skill set requirements will broaden, and the project is expected to provide more opportunities for northern businesses.

Mr. Speaker, ensuring that the benefits flow to Northwest Territories residents and businesses through the ongoing work to expand the Taltson hydro system will be an important consideration as we advance the project. It will be several years before this project is able to proceed to construction. In the meantime, the Government of the Northwest Territories will be working with its Indigenous partners to undertake studies, complete planning and regulatory work, and hold public community engagement sessions to ensure that residents and businesses can receive maximum benefit from this project. Quana, Mr. Speaker.